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“Don’t Be An Artist”:

**An Exploration into the Career Viability of UK Theatre
Companies in the Socio-Political Landscape of the 21st Century**

by Jacob Lewis Pratt

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

This study explores the most prevalent and challenging socio-political factors currently facing emerging theatre makers forming theatre companies in the UK. Through interviews with theatre makers who have worked within the framework of a theatre company over the last four decades, the research examines the methods these companies have utilised in order to successfully maintain their creative process.

It begins with a brief explanation of important terminology and then continues by providing an historical context for the development of theatre companies in this country. The research also establishes the important role of Arts Council England (ACE) as a primary source of funding and support for theatre companies of varying scale and resources.

The thesis continues by establishing the possible avenues for subsidising the income of a theatre company and focuses on the companies who have pursued different avenues of funding for primarily original material encompassing live performances, installations, annual festivals and more. The section is punctuated with ideological arguments for and against these routes and the ethical implications of pursuing each one. The final chapter discusses the possible structures theatre companies can take whilst simultaneously examining the ethical responsibility theatre companies have when operating commercially and on a not-for-profit basis.

The study concludes by examining the likelihood of career longevity for those working in theatre companies in the 21st Century; noting that there can be no room for structural or ideological absolutes, as the successful theatre company must operate as a hybrid. The research examines the idea that theatre companies will need to adapt and shift to the demands of organisations such as Arts Council England or learn to generate other means of support by finding private organisations who do not compromise the moral principles of the artist.

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1.0

Introduction

There are hundreds of theatre companies who are currently operating in the United Kingdom, ranging from the big-budget professional to the passionate amateur. Their work is undoubtedly varied in style and subjective quality but all play a significant role in society whether it be through productions that aim to promote social development to the companies who produce work for the purposes of pure entertainment. In the process of creating this work, there are many who have established the means to pay their performers, technicians and administrators a salary, allowing them to pursue it as their career full time. These theatre companies transcend their roles as solely theatre makers and must confront the challenges of becoming employers, taking on a responsibility and level of control the artist as an individual would not normally have to consider.

Whilst this structured approach has many financial and creative benefits, there are some however who believe that by following a rigid company structure, the artistic process is compromised and as a result believe an artist cannot truly be free to create their own work by adhering to this. This opinion may be founded on any number of factors including objections to state funding, ideological opposition to corporate sponsorship and a belief in the theatre company as a form of artistic expression and not a place for commercial growth.

Organisations such as Arts Council England, established in the 1940s, seek to facilitate the development of theatre companies by offering funding which is made available in one form or another to any company who wishes to apply for it but this does not come without

a degree of controversy at times and has led the broader artistic community to question what responsibility the Arts Council has to society as a whole. As a result, some artists have rejected what they view as being a form of state intervention and sought out other methods of support in producing their own work. This ranges from receiving funds from private corporations to holding independent fundraising events in a bid to garner a strong financial base and more publicity for their own work. It should be clear from the outset that there are many factors for the success or failure of a theatre company, so in order to properly examine them, this research paper is divided into five distinct sections.

The first clarifies the terms that will be commonly used in this paper, explaining what is understood by phrases with multiple definitions such as “success” and “career”; further examining their relevance in discussing the ongoing development of theatre companies in the UK.

The second chapter looks at the evolution of theatre companies on a decade by decade basis via a brief historical background in order to provide context for how theatre companies have developed and what socio-economic factors have facilitated their growth. Where possible, specific examples have been given in order to demonstrate how certain companies have been affected by particular events and how they relate to each other in the form of a timeline.

The third chapter explores the socio-political challenges the artist faces in pursuing the goal of forming a successful theatre company, examining the accounts of the artists who have formed companies who continue to operate at the time of writing. This section highlights the important role Arts Council England has in supporting theatre companies

and details the various methods of subsidy they have tapped into in order to establish successful a company.

The fourth chapter challenges the conventional definition of artistic success by exploring the routes in which some artists have followed in order to forge their own careers in a theatre company structure. It also examines what impact negative attitudes on the socio-political environment have on the likelihood of success for those working in theatre companies today and posits potential business structures for consideration.

The final chapter concludes by predicting what difficulties theatre companies will be forced to confront in the near future and what their likelihood of survival will be amidst a competitive battle for financial support and a constantly expanding artistic community.

Rationale:

The initial purpose of this research was to analyse on a fairly broad level how likely emerging theatre makers are to forge and sustain a career within a theatre company structure. It is important to clarify here that this is not a study that examines the success of the individual; rather a look at how others have approached the management of their own companies and what effect an artists' subjective ethical principles surrounding the creative process have had on the longevity of their careers.

Although research of this kind has a personal resonance to its author, it is the purpose of this paper to appeal specifically to emerging artists from all backgrounds and offer an

insight into the practice challenges that face those pursuing a creative career. There are texts available that offer a sense of the landscape, but come very far from offering an analytical approach (or even a deeper critique) of potential theatre company business structures. It is the intent of this paper to be informative, analytical and impartial whilst also detailing the contentious balance between business and creativity that theatre-makers have to navigate when forming a theatre company.

Methodology:

When starting to interview the participants for this research, the questions asked were heavily influenced by examples from my own personal background/experience/work in order to draw broad comparisons with other artists looking to use a theatre company model to create their own work. This is not to say that this research will make direct reference to myself, as my overall critical approach to the evidence will ultimately offer an objective set of conclusions. However, the key principals that uphold autoethnography have influenced this work as they can often:

Help facilitate understanding of a culture for insiders and outsiders, and is created by (inductively) discerning patterns of cultural experience—repeated feelings, stories, and happenings—as evidenced by field notes, interviews, and/or artefacts (Jorgenson, 2002).

This approach is the most appropriate critical lens to begin viewing this research as it allows for a subjective analysis of the material gathered but does not deny the impact the author himself has on how he presents and interprets the material. Bochner explains the academic advantage of doing this by stating that “the autoethnographer not only tries to

make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging, but also, by producing accessible texts, she or he may be able to reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards” (Bochner, 2002). It is important to state that, this is merely a framework and a starting point when it comes to analysing interviews and research materials from a place of personal interest and experience. This paper therefore is presented with the accessibility of an autoethnographic text in order for it to appeal to a broad audience but resembles more closely an academic investigation into the current state of UK theatre companies. This research will therefore be reviewed both qualitatively with quantitative elements; with the purpose of providing a greater understanding of the social, political and economic factors that artists in this country face on a regular basis when operating within the structure of a theatre company.

The original research presented in this paper was initially produced by conducting a series of interviews with a number of contemporary artists currently working within, or under the banner of, a theatre company. The five interview participants are listed below in alphabetical order.

- **John Britton**- Founder of international theatre company and training school Duende/ former drama department faculty of the University of Huddersfield. Britton has been producing a variety of types of work within theatre companies and as a solo performer since the 1980s but, under the Duende name, works with a small group of artists who focus largely on physicality and building a strong relationship between the ensemble and the audience.
- **Francesca Clarke**- Executive Producer of HighTide Theatre, a theatre company that produces new writing presented at an annual festival. The company was formed in 2007

and unlike the others in this study, originally started quite uniquely as a festival under the HighTide name. New writers are encouraged to submit original work to the company and, as part of their festival, they produce it with the aim of giving the writing as much exposure as possible. If successful, the work is often toured or transferred to a larger venue. They are based in Suffolk, but as of 2008 have also been invited to produce theatre outside of the area as with their production of *Stovepipe* at The National Theatre (HighTide, n.d.).

- **Josh Guiry**- Founder of Official Culture, former postgraduate student of the University of Huddersfield. Official Culture was formed in 2010 by Guiry and two fellow graduates, with the intention of creating work with a strong political ethos. The company is sadly no longer active, but throughout its run produced installations and site-specific pieces that occasionally doubled as a form of artistic protest.
- **Alan Lane**- Artistic Director of Slung Low, based in Holbeck (South Leeds). Slung Low “is a company that makes adventures for audiences outside of conventional theatre spaces” (Slung Low, n.d.) and does so by creating productions that often centre around a certain community. The pieces are often specifically designed for that location and the company places a particular importance on drawing in audiences who do not normally go to conventional theatre performances.
- **David Wheeler**- Artistic Director of IOU, based in Halifax, and one of the founding members of the company. “IOU is a producing organisation with nearly 40 years’ experience making live shows and contemporary art installations that combine many art forms together with new and innovative technology. All aspects of the work are originated by the company and devised for unusual indoor and outdoor locations as well as

established touring venues and galleries” (IOU Theatre, n.d.). Recent productions such as *Rear View* (2017), wherein an audience is transported via an adapted bus to different places with different performances, demonstrate the company’s unique way of challenging audience expectations of live performance and whilst the way IOU delivers its work has spanned many forms, genre and media over the years it has consistently continued to push the boundaries of experimental theatre and still does today.

These artists were chosen not because of their artistic output but because they all started with the similar motivation of wanting to create or produce their own work and most crucially, with the exception of Guiry, still prolifically produce work with a theatre company at the time of writing. The responses from the artists interviewed in this study have been analysed on a qualitative level, as this approach allows for a variety of personal accounts to be reviewed and questioned in order for broader conclusions to be garnered about the research. It is important to note that while this research will analyse the working practices and attitudes the participants have had on their own career trajectory, this paper takes a balanced stance on their responses and places more relevance on the socio-political factors responsible for their varying levels of success.

Research Ethics:

To allow for the data to be collected effectively, all of the participants in the study were asked exactly the same questions in the same order, albeit with minor alterations or interruptions. Where necessary, specific additional questions or follow-ups were asked to the participants in order to supplement or clarify the information given. A full transcript of each interview is attached in the *Appendix* of this paper to allow for full transparency and to allow for the responses to be viewed in their original context. However to fully allow for

an ethical presentation of this study, some names or comments have been redacted to give the participants anonymity and freedom to discuss the questions asked as honestly as possible. Due to the personal nature of the responses during the interview process, in addition to the option of anonymity on request, the participants all signed a waiver allowing their accounts to be reproduced and debated in this paper and have all been given the option to withdraw at any point if they deem it necessary and without question.

Review of Current Literature:

In addition to conducting a study into UK theatre companies, some key texts have informed the socio-political lens in which this data has been interpreted. An entry point into looking at theatre as a tool for political engagement can be found in *Theatre & Politics* by Joe Kelleher (2009), wherein the author provides evidence of theatre becoming a mouthpiece for political opinion and brings into question to what extent this is recognised by an audience viewing a performance.

Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today by Aleks Sierz (2011) examines specific work produced both by writers and theatre companies in the early 21st Century and what impact important productions have had when they were originally presented. Sierz argues that writers of the early 2000s used their work to respond to the political and economic issues of the time and has informed the critical framework used to view the accounts of the artists interviewed for this study. Far from being simply an historical interview of a certain period, the author's accessible explanation of theatrical globalisation and the move towards subsidised new writing has undoubtedly influenced both the content and presentation of this research.

For an invaluable recent history of theatre companies in this country, *British Theatre Companies: From Fringe to Mainstream* edited by John Bull and Graham Saunders (2015) provides a detailed study of companies and their work from 1965 to the present day. These three volumes present both practical explanations of work from a variety of different theatre companies whilst also analysing what political and social factors influenced them. The volumes explain how companies such as Gay Sweatshop and Women's Theatre Group brought political issues to the forefront of the theatrical landscape in the 1980-1990s and changed the way in which theatre companies function as tools for stimulating political conversation and instigating social change.

Other texts such as *Reverberations Across Small-Scale British Theatre* by Patrick Duggan and Victor Ukaegbu (2013) have been equally as valuable in offering political and historical context for particular theatre companies, along with a selection of others that can be found in the bibliography of this paper. However, in conjunction with this and due to the ongoing nature of this research, a number of sources have been drawn from newspaper articles, websites, radio interviews, television reports and other forms of media to allow for up to date reports of the social and political developments currently impacting UK theatre companies.

2.0

Defining Key Research Terms

Throughout the reading of this document, many terms and phrases will be encountered that on the surface may seem to be simple, but upon closer examination become both vague and intangible. This section will act as a way of unpicking these terms, simplifying them and specifying their meanings in the context of this research paper. At the same time, although the aim of this section is to clarify certain terms, to quote Kershaw and Nicholson (themselves referencing Jerome Kerr) “‘Knowing is a process not a product’ and it is always intuitive and exploratory” (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2010: p13). Therefore, this chapter should be viewed as an exploration of the pitfalls and contradictions that can arise from the assumed meanings of these terms.

2.1. Defining “Theatre Company”

Relatively simple terms can often be loaded with multiple meanings. To properly explain what a theatre company is and subsequently how it functions, we must examine how both the words ‘theatre’ and ‘company’ will be used in the research process separately.

Theatre is often used as a broad way of referencing any form of entertainment viewed in an actual theatrical space or setting. For instance, this term could easily be applied to dance, spoken word, plays, musicals, opera, comedy and a plethora of other varied mediums that are too endless to list here. In these examples, the piece of theatre would be attended by an audience who are likely to be viewing it from a theatre building, venue or other setting. However, Peter Brook famously stated in the opening lines of *The Empty*

Space that "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (Brook, 2008: p11). This set a precedent in the way in which an act of theatre can be identified allowing for work of all kinds to be grouped under this banner.

For the purpose of this document, the term theatre will not be limited to any particular definition but instead will be explained when an appropriate example calls for it and through a description of the work produced by the company being examined. The focus of this research is primarily on organisations that produce their own work, which in this case means they have total control over the work they choose and in many examples create original material for performance. In many examples, the type or genre of theatre produced is less important during this research process, than the way in which the companies interviewed and profiled operate on a practical basis. This isn't to say that the work they produce may/may not be a significant factor in the success of the company, simply that it is one of many and in some cases is an appropriate way of comparing the participants side-by-side.

In theatre phraseology, the term company is often attributed to a group of people who form with the intention of creating and/ or having the means to choose their own work. The *Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus* lists ten variables of the word, but it is the central three that have the most relevance in this case: "4. a business enterprise. 5. the member's of a business enterprise not specifically mentioned in the enterprise's title. 6. A group of actors (McLeod, 1987: p195). Although a dictionary definition of 'company' is fairly limited, it is worth noting as a basis for explaining it's relevance in the context of this research. These definitions show that a company can be viewed as both a form of business venture and a

way of grouping performers, and in this specific example, actors. This will be the direct focus of this research and one of its main aims will be to unpick the complex relationship between artistic expression and the practicalities of operating as a form of business enterprise.

2.2. Defining “Professional”

It could be argued that the phrase ‘professional’ has often been attributed to situations where the individual/company makes enough money to make it their chosen profession, however as Jane Scott, a Guardian journalist, puts it “simply because of the way the industry works, by this definition many people who work in theatre wouldn't count. There are thousands upon thousands of trained professionals who are unable to find paid work in theatre, let alone enough work to earn a full income” (Scott, 2011). When looking at theatre companies through the same scope as other ‘professionals’, it becomes a little more difficult to fit them all into the same description. Slung Low for example, a company that will be studied in closer detail later on in this paper, is undoubtedly a professional collective of performers who equally earn “£500 a week”, however unlike a normal business this money is not generated through paying customers (or audience members) as “that would never cover the company’s costs” (Lane, 2016). This is an important factor in the challenging nature of applying business terms to the theatrical community, as not all but many do not make a significant profit from audience revenue alone and instead rely on grants from funding bodies such as Arts Council England (ACE) and in some cases also receive investments from private organisations.

So, what is the difference between professional and amateur theatre companies; and why is it important to clarify the differences between the two? In the aforementioned article,

Scott notes that since the 1988 Human Rights Acts made Equity membership no longer compulsory, “the distinctions have become somewhat murkier” (Scott, 2011). This clearly suggests a shift in attitude from a traditional sense of the word implying a professional is granted status from a workers union, to a more fluid understanding of the word in today’s industry. Equity of course primarily represents artists in an individual capacity, although that isn’t to say that a case could not be made that those individual artists may go on to form theatre companies in the future. However, as previously stated, Equity membership is no longer required in order to perform on a professional stage, so it would be more beneficial to look at the some of these similarities to amateur theatre companies as a starting point. Scott describes the commonality of the two as such:

So what, really, are the differences between the situation of the performers I've just described and amateurs? Both groups rehearse in the evenings and weekends in order to fit around their paying jobs. Both use ticket income to pay for the essentials of set, props, costumes and the rest, but usually have little left over in wages/expenses. Both perform for the love of putting on theatre. Often both include performers or creatives who are trained, the difference being in amateur theatre that those people have decided to make a decision to leave the world of theatre and perform as a hobby, while the professional performers remain hopeful and keep their Spotlight subscription (Scott, 2011).

By comparing both structures side by side, Scott demonstrates that there is very little other than attitude and self-belief that separates the both types of company. Therefore, because of the shared characteristics between professional and amateur companies, for the purpose of this research the term will be used to describe a like-minded collective who create and produce their own work whilst also meeting any of the following criteria. These

have been listed in order to allow a range of theatre companies to be included in this research, regardless of size, access to funding and the types of work they produce:

1. A company who has the means to produce their own work; either original or scripted.
2. A company who receives regular funding from ACE (also known as a National Portfolio Organisation) and/or receives money from a private business or individual
3. A company who wishes to produce work with a social, political or experimental objective, as opposed to work created for entertainment purposes solely.

As may be gathered from this, the term is used in a fairly broad sense to describe a variety of groups who produce theatre, however what all of the companies who will be featured in the following sections have in common is that they have all endeavoured to produce their own work and have all found relative success in this field in one sense or another.

2.3. Defining “Career”

As discussed in the previous section, a theatre company may not be able to offer an artiste a sole career option as not all can afford to pay a minimum wage. This means that although some professional companies do have a permanent group of members, others bring in different performers depending on the work. Lane describes the make-up of Slung Low as “... a whole group of artists but their relationship with the company is unique in that there are people that we work regularly with but might not necessarily consider themselves members” (Lane, 2016), making the definition of career a much more fluid term in this context, as many performers move onto other companies and roles, similarly to other non-creative jobs.

It is important at this point to ask ourselves, in any other profession how would we normally define a career? Most would probably suggest that a career is a way of labelling a chosen profession that provides a regular job and income for the individual pursuing it. As an extension of this, we can infer that a career must provide financial security for it to offer any kind of longevity to qualify as a viable occupation. However as London mayor Sadiq Khan recently stated:

Very often, the average salary of an artist [in the capital] is something like £10,000 and unless you've got a mum and dad who can support you it's very difficult to become an artist, so we have got to have a plan that addresses the fact that, unfortunately, if we're not careful, the arts and culture are going to be the preserve of those who are well off (Snow, 2016).

Whilst mainly discussing the need for a State-based reorganisation of the arts, his words suggest that in the theatre money often comes from other places, as having such a minimal salary is not enough to sustain the artist individually. The usual application of the term 'career' is therefore not necessarily relevant to the individual members who make up the company, so for future reference will be used in this research to instead refer to the survival of the company itself. However, although it is useful to refer back to the individual trying to forge a career in this field, this research will primarily be focusing on how a theatre company can produce work and the practical methods they can employ to survive. The research will continue to examine through to what extent the theatre company effectively acts as an employer for the artist, whilst also granting them creative purpose and in the process creating something of a legacy on a much larger scale.

Psychologist John Arnold summarises that phrases such as career are a way of asserting control over our lives and to understand them requires “exploration [which] can lead to innovative and balanced analyses of how people and their careers develop, how the notion of career success can be construed, how career is an inherently social process, and how career and other arenas of life interact” (Arnold, 2011). This is a central theme that will be closely challenged in this research and will be the guiding force in understanding how success can be measured for the theatre company starting out today.

2.4. Arts Council England Programmes

When it comes to the matter of funding theatre companies, Arts Council England (ACE) is the most notable UK organisation for those seeking to pursue artistic ventures. There are many programmes currently available to theatre makers, but *Grants for the Arts* and National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding are two of the most notable and will be discussed in length during this research. As they are such an important financial resource for theatre companies, a clear definition of these terms has been included below in order to provide more context for the reader.

Grants for the Arts is an “open access funding programme for individuals, art organisations and other people who use the arts in their work” (Arts Council England, n.d.), allowing anyone who wishes to produce their own work the opportunity to receive one-off funding from the organisation. An artist or theatre company can apply for an amount of money “from £1,000 to £100,000 to support a wide variety of arts-related activities, from dance to visual arts, literature to theatre, music to combined arts” and if successful in their application will be expected to provide reports on the progress of the project and financial records in order to ensure that the “funding is being used appropriately” (Arts Council

England, n.d.). The application will be reviewed to see if it meets a certain set of criteria and what the project classifies as: under £15,000 or over £15,000. The primary directive for *Grants for the Arts* is allowing a broad selection of projects and artists from different backgrounds the support to create their own work; ranging from low budget to much larger scale projects. Theatre makers such as Official Culture's Josh Guiry and Duende's John Britton have been recipients of this programme in the process of financing and producing their own work.

National Portfolio Organisations (NPO's) "receive regular funding from the Arts Council- currently for a period of three years" and "for the funding period 2015-18, there are 663 organisations" in the National Portfolio (Arts Council England, n.d.). According to the Arts Council's website, recent funding decisions have been made in two stages:

Firstly, we looked at the application itself, and secondly, we decided how well we thought each applicant would fit into a balanced National Portfolio to ensure we had the right spread of investment (Arts Council England, n.d.).

In theory, this programme is available to all creative organisations wishing to further the development of their creative work but due in part to the large amount of money available and the list of criteria that needs to be met, this is limited to the companies with the means to achieve this. This criteria is specified in the *Great Arts and Culture for Everyone* document published by ACE and is the primary source referred to when assessing which organisations to fund. This is subject to change on a three year basis and as such, funding after this time is not guaranteed if a company ceases to meet the previous demands of the Council or their agenda changes making the company no longer eligible. Current

examples of theatre companies who are recognised as National Portfolio Organisations are Slung Low, IOU Theatre and HighTide.

3.0

Historical Background

The current moment of flux, change and 'austerity measures'- socially, politically and artistically- is precisely the moment, in which to look back at the history of small-scale British theatre for valuable lessons about 'survival' in moments of economic crisis and political resistance to arts practices as a formal part of social processes (Duggan and Ukaegbu, 2011: p13).

To chart the development and the potential success or failure of small theatre companies, it is first integral to understand the historical context and challenges that artists have faced since the inception of Arts Council England. Whilst looking at a brief portrait of theatre history throughout the last six decades, it would be pertinent at the moment for us ask what similarities can we draw from now back to the past and what can we learn to aid the survival of the artist working today? The primary focus of this study is of course on the development and practice of small-scale theatre companies however, far from simply acting as a how-to guide, this project will interrogate how these past attitudes, politics and social developments advantage or disadvantage the emerging artist looking to form a successful company right now and discuss to what extent the constantly shifting contemporary theatre landscape might affect them.

Each period in the 20th century and beyond has brought with it both unique opportunities and difficulties for companies operating outside of the mainstream; arguably shaping their work in career defining ways. This concise section will briefly outline the pivotal moments in funding (and other developments) for the arts over the last century and will demonstrate

what effect the concurrent social and political shifts have had on the small-scale theatre companies in this study.

3.1. Post-War Period

Arguably the most important event influencing how theatre is produced in this country was the formation of Arts Council England (ACE) in 1946. The practical methods for which a grant can be applied for and the types of funding ACE currently offers are detailed in the following section but is important to first explore the reasoning for why the Arts Council was originally established and what was practically offered to theatre makers during the 1940s.

We may take it as a given now but this was the UK's first national funding corporation that solely focused on producing art and artists for the many as opposed to the previously held belief that "there could sometimes appear to be a lofty separation between artists and the rest of the population, and politicians and funding organisations took a rather patrician view of audiences, who were offered what the establishment thought was good for them, rather than what they might actually want or need" (Henley, 2016). As social attitudes towards the importance of the arts changed, this led to a much more varied stance on ACE funding encapsulating different projects and charitable foundations in support of the arts and eventually leading to legislation that created a program of regular government funding referred to as Grant in Aid as of 1994. This demonstrates the extreme change in attitude from 50 years ago up to the current period and it is pivotal to further examine effect governmental policy has on the control the institution has over it's own agenda.

3.2. 1960s-1970s

The free thinking, looser attitude of a new generation of the 1960s produced a degree of de-formalisation in the performance arts, shifting the focus from traditional forms of theatre making to visual artists, poets, dancers, spoken word performers, musicians and more. It could be said that this is an approach that very much stays true to the work of some theatre companies today, however little importance was stressed on how a company should be categorised or labelled and instead on the spontaneity of the event itself. Spontaneous events, known as “Happenings”, brought together various groups of artists all looking not just to express themselves creatively but to generate an environment that profoundly effects the lifestyles of those working together in that way.

Emerging from this exciting new scene, collectives of creative individuals joined forces and formed companies such as IOU Theatre. This approach consisted of many forms of media, not rejecting traditional techniques but instead building on them with a variety of mixed media creating a working environment “that allows the content of its artistic impulse to determine the form it [the work] needs to take” (Middleton & Moss, Accessed 10/10/2016). It could be said that this amalgamation of old and new techniques, conventional and non-conventional ‘performers’ (a loose description of those involved in this context) helped to change the general opinion of the theatre-maker as solely an entertainer and ushered in a new age of the artist that did not necessarily fit into the description of performer. IOU for instance later dropped the word “Theatre” from their title, suggesting that the work they now create can no longer be solely described as such.

3.3. The 1980s

Whilst this previous, informal movement may have been the basis for some successful working relationships it also brought with it a less than positive response from some funding organisations as the work either did not meet their desired criteria or was not presented in a way that suited what they were looking to help produce. An artist in this study who found this to be the case was John Britton, founder of international-based company and training school Duende, who applied for grants from ACE a number of times (albeit with different companies) throughout the 1980s with little success. This raises an important question on what types of work should and should not be granted public funding and to what extent should that be decided by the public themselves? This is a rhetorical question at this point and one that requires further scrutiny in the next chapter, but it is important to sign post it here to evidence the significance funding organisations such as ACE have in choosing which emerging artists to support.

The 1980s were a period of extreme social and political change. In 1979 a Conservative government took power, bringing with it the country's first female Prime Minister and an emerging view of the value of entertainment in monetary terms. A particular interest of the government during this period was the business and profile of the National Theatre, which in 1974 moved to London's fashionable South Bank area yet constantly faced challenges from the public over the kind of work being commissioned there. Controversy at the National hit fever pitch when a 1980 production of *The Romans in Britain* with a scene depicting an act of attempted homosexual rape leading to threats from Sir Horace Cutler (leader of The Greater London Council) to cut the theatre's grant and for "Mrs Mary Whitehouse, despite never having seen the play, to bring a private prosecution for

obscenity against the play's director, Michael Bogdanov" (National Theatre Online, 2016). On a commercial level, mainstream musical theatre was enjoying somewhat of a "new Musical renaissance" (Ball, 2016) thanks to big producers like Cameron Mackintosh who personally financed writers that created some of the longest running productions in the West End- including *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Miserables*.

Whilst the focus for many funding institutions fell onto large productions that created a high amount of revenue and boom for the country's economy, many small companies were founded by minority groups who increasingly felt marginalised in society. Their work was often created without funding from the official bodies and used the framework of the theatre company as a way of communicating in a more allegoric way the issues many groups at the time were facing and at the very least sought to open a dialogue on the political function of the modern theatre production. *Gay Sweatshop*, an activist-led theatre company that received and lost ACE funding a number of times during the 1980s created original work that brought light to complicated issues in the form of "AIDS plays and feminist theatre" and being categorised as such often helped the group survive when it came to arguing for public funding in 1984 as a "leading gay company and justify this as a legible category of alternative work" (Saunders, 2015: p142). These self-styled 'alternative' companies subverted the idea of theatre as entertainment and created work with a highly political motive with the idea of changing the status quo and generate discussions on issues that were often thought of as either taboo or not thought of at all.

3.4. Cool Britannia

Under the Blair government, a great importance was placed on "Education, Education, Education" and a goal was put in place to get 50% onto University placements across the

country by the end of the decade (Coughlan, 2007). It could be argued that the previous government's attitude and society's on a much larger scale carried over from the last decade with Ravenhill positing that "on top of the Thatcherite model for the arts, which Labour kept in place and expanded, the last government added an extra cost burden to the arts. Labour politicians pressed the arts to prove their social worth. As a way of winning funding, arts organisations increased their outreach work: education and community projects have been the growth sector of the last decade" (Ravenhill, 2010). Despite the supposed paradigm shift to a Labour government in 1997, a significant interest was still placed on mainstream theatre produced in and around London because of its massive effect on the economy via tourism and the international reputation it brought with it. This generated considerable interest from private companies who saw an opportunity to sponsor a popular venture and also be seen to be linked to renowned organisations who arguably increased their own reputation. In fact, starting in the mid-nineties and the space of five years "commercial investment in the arts doubled, reaching a total of £150m during 1999-2000" (BBC News, 2001).

Despite the interest in supporting large commercial productions and events, there were some organisations at the time that made funding available to emerging artists, one of which being Barclay's Bank who, in addition to sponsoring large companies, theatres and museums, also offered a subsidy to those with a much lower profile. This was perhaps due to the cultural movement at the time often referred to as 'Cool Britannia', which capitalised on the modern reputation of British artists around the world; from visual artists such as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin to the music exports of Blur and Oasis- and everything in between. Whilst this move could be viewed as a cynical way for corporate banks to be associated with icons of popular culture, it shouldn't be underestimated the extent to which this helped emerging artists to start creating their own work.

3.5. The Turn of the 21st Century

The Year 2000 marked celebrations for the new millennium and with it a positive outlook for the future of the arts. Artists who had utilised many unusual techniques in their work over the past decades, suddenly found that the experimental work they had created was becoming to enter the mainstream from the stage of The National Theatre in non-linear narrative shows such as *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* to newly established theatre companies such as Slung Low, based in Leeds. The company was comprised of a variety of different artists utilising a variety of mediums to create shows that appeal to a wide audience but differ from the expectations of the conventional theatre-goer. Slung Low, a Leeds based company founded in the early 2000s, was initially formed by a small group of graduates from the University of Sheffield and driven by the desire “to create adventures for audiences that didn’t mean sitting down in the dark in the theatre” (Lane, 2016). One of its founding members Alan Lane eventually became Artistic Director and continues to pursue the ethos of big budget, community based projects to this day- producing up to 9 shows a year with the company, as well as working on solo projects through commissions (Lane, 2016).

In 2004, Tessa Jowell made this announcement about the current state of culture in the UK:

Culture has an important part to play in defining and preserving cultural identity- of the individual, of communities, and of the nation as a whole... Culture defines who we are, it defines us as a nation. And only culture can do this (Duggan and Ukaegbu, 2004: pXI).

Jowell, then Culture Secretary within Blair's Labour government, describes a positive future for the arts but couldn't have predicted perhaps the biggest and most unpredictable moment of the decade. It is matter of debate on when the country's economy first began to collapse and which government was initially to blame but a serious problem became apparent towards the end of the decade, with the global economic crash of 2008. This announcement started with the collapse of US banking giants Lehman Brothers which created a trickle-down effect on the financial security of banks, governments and businesses across the world. As a result of this, the UK suffered the loss of two of its largest banks Alliance & Leicester and RBS, later bailed out by the government that swiftly introduced crippling austerity measures effecting policy across the board.

It has often been a commonly held belief that the arts is always the first to be cut in times of crises and never had this been so evident as when stories began to surface that Arts Council England was suffering a massive funding shortfall and risked permanent closure (Adams and Hope, 2009). To the surprise of many ACE survived the economic downturn and still offers various grants programs to this day, however as had happened for the previous generation, some emerging artists found it difficult to get funding from them in order to kickstart their own projects. Josh Guiry, a theatre maker and graduate from the University of Huddersfield, found this to be the case when he formed his own company *Official Culture* in 2011. Much of his initial work was aimed at staging events in the community in order to highlight a particular political issue, for example, the ongoing detention of prisoner's in Guantanamo Bay. In order to keep producing work as a company (as only few of the shows involved paying audience members), Guiry applied for a Grants for the Arts program but as described previously received little interest or success.

It remains to be seen exactly what challenges theatre funding faces in the coming years, but some have taken the view that support for the arts may be seemingly under threat from a government that, in 2015, had taken inspiration from the USA's Excellence in Education program, "a movement that has led to the eradication of the arts from state education" (Bob and Roberta Smith, 2015). In light of such impactful, social developments and examining evidence from the first-hand accounts of some artists working in theatre companies at the moment, this following chapters will examine what possible chance emerging theatre makers have at forging a career and what company structure they might follow in order for it to be a viable, sustainable career option.

4.0

Success and the Theatre Company

As discussed in the opening chapter of this research paper, the term “success” is incredibly subjective. One’s view of success is likely to differ from another’s and, unlike some careers, success in artistic terms can not (and need not) be measured in monetary terms alone i.e: the profitability of a production, annual salary, audience footfall and so on. It would however be naive to suggest that a company’s income is unimportant when discussing keeping a successful theatre company afloat. The idea of success goes much deeper than simply maintaining a profitable artistic venture, rather it is an idea that “perhaps conjures notions of status, advancement, and intrinsic satisfaction” (Arnold, 2011). A brief glance at the current theatre landscape reveals that small-scale theatre companies are emerging in different regions of the country every day and despite the difficulties facing them, they must find a practical route through this in order to secure their survival. As Britton suggests, “the financial sustainability of a theatre company is always crucial, unless you’re a rich boy and your parents can subsidise you” (Britton, 2016). In light of comments like these, this chapter will particularly focus on forming a theatre company through different avenues of financial subsidy ranging from Arts Council England to private organisations and the other, less conventional methods in between. The term subsidy will be clarified throughout where appropriate but in general refers to a theatre company that receives financial support by an organisation or business.

This chapter will further examine the contradictory relationship between the emotional, artistic and some of the practical challenges that those forming theatre companies face today and analyse on a broader level what it means to be successful in an artistic career in the UK in the 21st century against an ever shifting socio-political landscape.

4.1. The Social Stigma of Pursuing a Theatre Career

Whilst it is a generalisation that every person not working in the creative industry holds a negative view of a career in theatre, it is difficult to deny that most artists on some level have had their choice of career berated or belittled. This is of course a narrow minded opinion that generalises a field that encapsulates the academic, business and creative career opportunities available to the drama student but the idea that the creative arts can not be the basis for forming a career is a long held belief that, in many ways, can be traced back to early education wherein a student is likely to first encounter the possibility of pursuing drama as a subject and furthering it into a career.

In 2010, then Secretary of Education Michael Gove insisted that left-wing ideologies were saturating the school curriculum divisively dismissing this approach by describing a view that “[the system] shouldn’t be doing anything so old-fashioned as passing on knowledge, requiring children to work hard, or immersing them in anything like dates in history or times tables in mathematics” (Paton, 2010). Comments of this nature, whilst not attacking Arts subjects directly, carry an implicit message that “old-fashioned” or traditional subjects are more valued in the education system and that the other subjects that do not fall into this category can not be perceived as being “hard work.” The word traditional is used here in an anecdotal sense and describes the type of ‘respectable’ career that stereotypically stems from subjects such as science, mathematics, business and so on. Opinions from policy-makers such as Gove may have had a trickle down effect on educators and therefore their students who, when it comes to choosing which subjects to pursue as a career, may be steered away from Arts subjects as they are viewed to carry a less respected status that offers few practical career prospects. As Gove himself phrased it, those children who seek out an alternative to these traditional subjects are “condemned to

a prison house of ignorance” (Paton, 2010). This is a fundamentally regimented view on the education system that places more importance on one approach than another and does not take into account the benefits of a relational understanding of a subject, which educators such as Richard Skemp, originally a mathematician, believe to be an integral part of understanding a topic and furthering a development of skills in more depth. Skemp states:

Relational schemas are organic in quality. This is the best way I have been able to formulate a quality by which they seem to act as an agent of their own growth. The connection with 3 is that if people get satisfaction from relational understanding, they may not only try to understand relationally new material which is put before them, but also actively seek out new material and explore new areas, very much like a tree extending its roots or an animal exploring new territory in search of nourishment (Skemp, 1976: p7).

In his essay '*Relational Understanding and Instrumental Understanding*' (1976), Skemp debates the merits of a system that encourages discussion on a topic in more general terms versus the idea that fact-based learning in a more linear way is the solely effective method of teaching. In his essay, Skemp (who himself admits that he was originally sceptical of the relational approach when applying it to his field of mathematics) states that the instrumental approach is often the easier to understand “so the rewards are more immediate, and more apparent. It is nice to get a page of right answers, and we must not underrate the importance of the feeling of success which pupils get from this” (Skemp, 1976: p8). However, he continues to argue that with a wider knowledge of a topic comes a much greater understanding and a more adaptable set of skills. Despite this, currently in the United Kingdom, a pupil’s educational development in school is primarily judged on the

top band grades they manage to achieve and what universities they can attend because of this. This can be a restrictive approach to creative subjects as it relies on meeting a set of criteria and does not measure a pupil's individual development. In 2015, an open letter to the Secretary of Education by a group of children's authors stated that the insistence of marking a primary pupil's creative writing on the "flowery language" used and pushing them to use "longer words" have a knock on effect on the standard of creative writing both at secondary and in some cases university level (Flood, 2015). Leading author of the open letter, CJ Busby notes that "if you look at the national curriculum descriptions, they are picking up on something that happens to children's writing as it develops – vocabulary becomes more complex, and sentence structure becomes more complex, so in that sense there is nothing necessarily wrong with what they're saying. The problem comes when you try to turn that into a marking scheme, which says you get more marks for an unusual word than a usual word, or a sentence with a subclause rather than one without" (Flood, 2015). Echoing Skemp's theory that a broader understanding of a discipline can be more rewarding she goes on to state that through the current more instrumental system "there's no time to encourage kids to read more, or talk more, and that's where more complex structures get embedded in a real way" (Flood, 2015). This suggests that although Skemp's description of a more relational approach has intrinsic value in developing a person's knowledge of a given topic, it is very difficult to quantify when it comes to creative subjects and measuring the development of a student.

It is difficult to find evidence to support the theory that incendiary comments from those in government directly influence the ideas of the educators their policies effect and is best saved for a study that focuses on education primarily, but it is worth noting that some in the teaching profession may have been vehemently opposed to the government's recent stance on creative subjects. This opposition has been most vocal in the past few years,

culminating in 2013 at the annual Association of Teacher's and Lecturers (ATL) conference, when delegates overwhelmingly passed a vote of no confidence in Gove's ability as Secretary of Education stating "abject failure to improve education or treat teachers, parents and pupils with respect" (Shepherd, 2013). Therefore whilst the link is indirect, highly publicised statements such as Gove's- negatively relating "left-wing ideologies" with arts subjects- undoubtedly add to an already prevailing view that studying Drama with the aim of forming a theatre-based career has less worth. This also establishes a divisive priority of one type of career over another and enforces the already established negative stereotype of the creative career. This is far from being the only reason an ongoing social stigma exists but is one of the most prevalent ways emerging artists in the UK are likely to encounter it.

In some ways, the view as the artist as the outsider is a romantic idea that has historically been embraced by the artistic community; particularly by theatrical companies. This reputation can be traced back to the late 1500s wherein it was commonplace for troupes of actors to drink, famously covert with prostitutes and spend time with other people of ill-repute (Shakespeare's Globe, n.d.). The actors of the time were often members of theatre companies, for instance William Shakespeare's original company 'The Lord Chamberlain's Men', and were historically paid very little during this period- often having to maintain other jobs on the side in order to make their theatre work financially viable (Hetherington, 2015). The opinion that working in a theatre company cannot offer financial security is still echoed today, even by those working in a company structure themselves. Founder of Duende, John Britton categorically states that "if your ambition is to be full time employed- don't be a fucking artist. There are good ways to get paid in full time work and artist is not one of them. If that is your ambition then you're a fool", concluding that "it's not financially sensible and that's why the company structure destroys art" (Britton, 2016). Whilst this is

undoubtedly a staunch opinion, there is a track record of theatre companies such as Slung Low and IOU who operate in a different way to Britton and manage to keep artists on as paid employees. It would be reasonable to conclude that although a company may be forced to make some artistic compromises, it is not simply an impossible dream to be a regularly paid artist working within the structure of a theatre company.

4.2. Arts Council England (ACE)

Due to the widely varying nature of the work that theatre companies have the ability to produce, it would likely be divisive to suggest that certain types of work are more deserving of funding than others. The value of artistic output, in monetary terms at least, however is decided to an extent by the organisations that select which companies receive funding and how that criteria is to be met. The organisation Arts Council England (ACE) is probably the best known example of this, receiving a lot of publicity in the national press when funding is granted or taken away from certain well-known theatre companies or theatres themselves. The Arts Council has gone through many significant changes in the 70 years in which it has been operating, including regional restructuring and receiving its share of public criticism (Henley, 2016); this section will examine the development of an Arts Council in the UK and to what extent these different social and historical developments have affected the operations of the organisation.

The founding principle upon which ACE was formed and one that arguably still stands true today is the idea that the organisation would always operate at arms-length of the government but never be directly dictated to them. In practice, this means that ACE receives a significant portion of public money in the form of National Lottery intake and a percentage from the taxpayers. This has been allocated by various branches of the State Department under a number of different names throughout the years but most recently this has been the role of the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, which as of July 2016 has been the duty of Matt Hancock, MP (Gov.UK, 2016).

When it comes to examining the origins of the organisation, it is important to make clear that whilst the Arts Council was officially formed post-war in 1946, it was originally formed to represent the whole of Great Britain and was not, as is the case today separated by

region. The organisation was first set up by Royal Charter (on the orders of King George VI) in 1940, under the title of Committee for Encouragement of Music and Arts. This was a significant move at the time as it represented the chance for the country to start celebrating the arts again during wartime, as well as creating an institution dedicated to granting more people the ability explore their own artistic ambitions than ever before (Henley, 2016). When the organisation was renamed, John Maynard Keynes became its director, explicitly stating in a BBC Radio interview that very year his belief of the importance of creating artists:

...who walks where the breath of the spirit blows him. He cannot be told his direction; he does not know it himself. But he leads the rest of us into fresh pastures and teaches us to love and enjoy what we often begin by rejecting, enlarging our sensibility and purifying our instincts (Henley, 2016).

This ethos was embraced by the country in the form of the Festival of Britain in 1951; a series of cultural events taking place in towns and cities across the country “with the aim of promoting the feeling of recovery... celebrating British industry, arts and science and inspiring the thought of a better Britain” (Johnson, 2015). The festival was funded by the government, with money allocated by the Arts Council and as a result of this, the organisation faced its first major wave of public outcry as “many people believed it would have been better spent on housing after the destruction of many houses during the Second World War”. Despite this, the temporary festival ran for over 5 months and “had been a success and turned over a profit as well as being extremely popular” (Johnson, 2015).

Following on from this significant investment into Britain's cultural identity, in 1964 Jennie Lee was appointed as the first ever Minister for the Arts under Harold Wilson's Labour government (ACE, *Our History*, n.d). Although this was short-lived as she was moved to the Department of Education in March 1965 (Open University, 2011), the creation of a dedicated Arts position to implement government policy and distribute funding was arguably instrumental in the survival of the Arts Council over the next few decades, as it created a direct and clear link to it's government bonds and offered a level of ministerial oversight through a dedicated post as well as allowing the public to exercise their democratic right by voting for the arts policies they wanted to see enacted. This is demonstrated through the specific policies of MP's running for the post of Minister for Culture and a vote from the public at the ballot box represents a degree of ideological control over the country's arts and culture programme. This means that, although the positions in cabinet can not be voted for directly, through a popular vote general public have a significant way of shaping the types of projects and artists they want to see funded and therefore produced.

The most significant change to the Arts Council came in 1994, when it was decided by the State Department (Henley, 2016) that the Arts Council was to be split into individual regional offices, renaming themselves Arts Council England and allowing for both Scotland and Wales to receive their own branch of the funding institution. This came after two damning reports *Glory of the Garden* (Arts Council, 1984) and *The Wilding Report* (Parliament, 1989), which suggested two key areas that required serious development 1). It was stated that regional funding was being overlooked in comparison to the inequitable level of funding allocated to the London area and 2). In order to rectify this, the regional boundaries should be redrawn to create a less bureaucratic and more equitable system. Around the same time, on top of the government subsidy already granted to ACE, the

National Lottery was created and it was decided that ACE would be allowed to distribute a significant proportion of money through various funding programs such as green lighting individual projects known as *Grants for the Arts*. The money allocated to ACE is also shared between a variety of organisations, who are commonly referred to as National Portfolio Organisations (NPO's) (Arts Council England, n.d.).

As well as offering programs such as *Grants for the Arts* for emerging artists working in the theatre, a significant proportion of ACE funding also goes to museums, libraries galleries and community projects to name just a few examples (*Great Art and Culture for Everyone*, 2013: p47). This is significant to mention when discussing the often controversial topic of government cuts to ACE funding as, although certain companies/institutions are offered relatively large sums of money on an annual basis, governmental regime changes can alter the funding criteria of the Arts Council and it has been anecdotally suggested that companies are rarely guaranteed a particular amount of money and face the risk of losing funding altogether during every government evaluation (Wheeler, 2016). It is debatable as to what extent percentage cuts across the board affect the aforementioned portfolio organisations, but it would be fair to argue that the funds allocated to each discipline (used here to refer to the different forms of theatre) are not always equal. For instance, when funding cuts were announced in 2014, a BBC News article suggested that “if ACE said that a 36% monetary cut would have led it to cut 60% of its funded organisations, it is clear that the axe would have fallen on the smallest, cheapest targets first” (Youngs, 2014).

4.2.1. Questioning the Social and Political Responsibility of Arts Council England

There is a general consensus amongst the artistic community that in times of financial crises such as the global banking crash of 2008, organisations such as ACE cut funding

from the “smallest targets” (Youngs, 2014) in order to maintain funding to the larger companies that arguably generate more revenue and public interest. Whilst there are funding opportunities in place for new companies starting out through *Grants for the Arts* project funding, there is also a founded perception amongst some artists who work with theatre companies that if the work they want to produce is not commercially viable or does not tick the correct boxes on the application form, there is very little chance of receiving continued support from ACE. This is due in part to the highly selective nature of the NPO programme, as it will only be granted to already well established companies who meet the specific criteria detailed in the opening chapter of this paper.

As stated previously, ACE’s manifesto states that they operate at a fundamental distance of the UK government but that they are not dictated to or bound by government policy. This has officially been the case since the conception of an Arts Council in its original form back in the 1940s but several instances of a removal of funding- most notably Gay Sweatshop who faced cuts four times throughout the 1980s- leading some theatre makers to suggest that anti-homosexual government policy mixed with a vocal public backlash typical of the period were enough to push ACE to revise the companies in their National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) programme (Freeman and Saunders, 2015).

Similarly to this, John Britton remarked that throughout his career working in a variety of different theatre companies, he had applied for ACE funding but had consistently been denied it on the basis that he was not willing to compromise the type of work he wanted to produce with what the organisation was offering to fund. Britton believes this to be a fundamental betrayal of the artistic democracy that (in his opinion) the organisation should provide to artists whose work does not automatically generate commercial interest. He further stated that by accepting money from an organisation that receives an allocation of

government funds, he would become “part of the system” (Britton, 2016) and would not be interested in being complicit with a government-related organisation he can not politically align himself with. Therefore, whilst ACE claims to have no overarching political agenda, the way in which they revise their funding criteria and their choice of which theatre companies face losing their NPO status, either intentionally or unintentionally has created a prevailing opinion amongst artists such as John Britton that they are intrinsically influenced by government regimes. This is a clear point of contention for 21st century theatre-makers seeking financial support, with Slung Low’s Lane resolutely disagreeing with Britton’s theory of the Arts Council’s position of responsibility to society in the UK, stating that “it’s not their job, their job is to use their money to push the agenda and they have a really clearly laid out plan for that. And if we don’t agree with that we should fight for them to change the Arts Council and stop asking them for money” (Lane, 2016).

When it comes to questioning the level of moral responsibility ACE have in providing opportunities for companies who may be disadvantaged or represent a work from a minority group, there is a myriad of opinion on how the organisation should operate. In the organisation’s own words they “have a duty to be fair, honest and open about the way we’re run, how much we spend and how we treat people” (Arts Council England, n.d.). Therefore, it is clear that in order for ACE to currently maintain a good reputation amongst theatre companies in the UK they need to remain fully accountable to members of the public. As they have a direct relationship to a government department and receive much of their funding from them, one way in which this has been established is through the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which can be accessed through their website (Arts Council England, n.d.). By filling out a short form, anyone can make a specific request for information and as long as this does not breach any national security measures (unlikely for information regarding the Department of Culture), this will be investigated and

processed in due course. More publications from the organisation are also available online, allowing for a greater level of transparency when it comes to finding information on which specific companies receive funding, along with their accounts and annual reports on how successful they have been in meeting the objectives laid out in their manifesto. This information can be accessed by anyone and allows those with potential objections to the sociological impact of the organisation to investigate further for themselves and make an informed decision on whether they agree with what ACE are attempting to accomplish.

4.3. Establishing Financial Stability

A factor that may concern those looking to form a company of any type is the initial financial cost. When creating a production specifically- materials, venue hire and ‘hidden’ administration fees all incur considerable costs. These are of course variables that alter depending on the type of work being produced by a company; for instance- if the work produced is entirely original and requires no performance license, a quick inquiry on the Samuel French website reveals a professional theatre company would be likely to save anywhere between £60-£1000+. This does however raise a potentially vital question- if a company is relying on ticket sales alone to make back the cost of the production (or ultimately make a profit), how likely would they be to generate a large enough audience to achieve this with an original piece of work that does not have an established reputation or audience base? Artistic Director of Slung Low, Alan Lane insisted that his company “have never made a profit from ticket sales alone” (Lane, 2016); a sentiment that many other artists interviewed in the course of this research also echoed. Many companies like Slung Low rely on regular ACE funding, referred to as National Portfolio funding to maintain the expensive productions and rehearsal facilities necessary in order to develop their work and keep on a small but reliable roster of paid employees.

Therefore the likelihood of running a theatre company in the same way as any other business must be questioned. What product can a theatre company offer an audience to make the rest of their work commercially viable? Often at times, theatre companies have been forced to branch out away from just exhibiting productions into workshops, exhibitions and commissioned work from commercial entities in order to create a regular stream of income. This can be seen in the makeup of IOU Theatre’s board, as it now includes members who come from the private sector in a bid to access wider funding (Wheeler, 2016). David Wheeler, Artistic Director of IOU, described this as a much more

ideal situation when it comes to raising funds for the company as although they have been an NPO for many years- the funding can still be taken away after the three year period is up. Whilst this is relatively unlikely at the present time for IOU given it's longstanding history with the Arts Council, it is still possible and not unheard of in the geographic area in which the company produce their work. For example, in April 2015, Leeds based theatre company Red Ladder lost 100% of their ACE funding leaving them with a relatively small annual grant of £5000 from Leeds City Council, as opposed to the £162,000 per annum they would have been due to receive (Red Ladder, 2015). In a subsequent statement, Artistic Director Rod Dixon suggested that this cut would not allow them to produce the planned work for the next funding period. In a public statement issued on their website, he said "we put in what we believed was a hugely exciting programme of work to 2018, and it is disappointing to know that those plans will not now come to fruition, at least not in the form we envisaged" (Dixon, 2015).

The reasons for removing organisations from the NPO programme are not always clear, but in the case of Red Ladder it may come down to the geographical region in which their work is produced. If there are many theatre companies in the Leeds area (for instance) that receive similar amounts of annual funding, there is a very high chance that when funding allocated to Arts Council England is reduced, they will be forced to reduce the number of companies who are funded altogether rather than remove funding proportionally across the board. This is due in part to ensuring that different regions across the country are allocated the equitable percentage of funding that ACE details in their manifesto- *Great Arts and Culture for Everyone* (ACE, 2013).

4.3.1. Fundraising from Other Sources

It is this threat to financial certainty that has led theatre companies in recent times to seek out other methods of fundraising, with arguably the most successful of these being commissioned work from businesses, charities and other organisations. Alan Lane mentioned that “nearly all” of Slung Low’s work is commissioned by local councils or festivals and described Slung Low’s outdoor, experience-based work as “ticking that box for the people who want to fill that slot” in their event schedule (Lane, 2016). This has many benefits as it allows a company to produce work in a guaranteed location, with a guaranteed budget and audience. This gives the company more time to focus on the work being produced without fear of losing funding but can be restrictive depending on the setting or work required. Britton, while not against receiving funding through commissions, believes that producing work for a specific venue or to a specification dilutes work and that it’s not conducive to the artistic process to “have others deciding what work you make”; further stating that “it’s not the artist’s job” to create work under such circumstances (Britton, 2016).

An unlikely source of funding that might not seem the obvious choice to new theatre companies comes from trade unions; a source University of Huddersfield graduate Josh Guiry tapped into when co-founding his theatre company Official Culture back in 2010 (Guiry, 2016). Guiry found that a Labour trade union in Huddersfield had allocated a small proportion of funds to support local campaigns, charities and groups and after a conversation with one of their representatives was granted enough money to start producing politically charged work heavily critical of the current government. It was important for Guiry’s company to receive money from a trade union that he politically aligns himself with as his work was not designed with a commercial audience in mind but

instead was site-specific and driven by a clear ideological set of principles. Just as Britton felt he could not receive money from an organisation he fundamentally disagrees with, Guiry's theatre company Official Culture were placed in a similar situation and their search for funding was led primarily by the work itself and not by the desire to create work at any cost. This avenue, while entirely dependant on the type of work the theatre company seeks to produce, is incredibly significant as it demonstrates that the artist can still create work with a personal resonance and does not have to sacrifice their own principles in order to find financial support.

Similarly to Guiry, Francesca Clarke found that when producing her own work independently, she garnered a lot of interest from the local Jewish community in Suffolk who were interested in helping to finance a new production that featured Jewish characters and actors. Clark recently found that when it came to looking at financing for the project that one of her producers was Jewish and "had contacts and received donations from the Jewish community as well" (Clark, 2016). Targeting specific groups that want to have an involvement in local arts projects has it's clear advantages, as it allows for project-specific funding from sources that have a genuine engagement with a theatre company's work. On the other hand, as the funding is project specific it does have it's obvious limitations and even Clark conceded that "it's not really a source I can tap into for future shows" (Clark, 2016).

When it comes to providing resources, support is often made available through other nationally funded organisations. Somewhereto_ are a National Lottery funded foundation that aim to find rehearsal space and performance venues for people aged between 16-25 looking to produce creative projects without the means to do so by themselves. According to their website "since 2010, somewhereto_ has liberated over £7 million of previously

empty or unused space for young people between the ages of 16 and 25, to use for free” (somewhereto_, n.d.), significantly reducing one of the largest costs for a new theatre company. In a similar spirit to this, both Proper Job Theatre Company based in Huddersfield and Slung Low based in Leeds, offer out their venues on a “pay what you can basis” (Lane, 2016), meaning that all theatre companies regardless of scale are afforded the same opportunities to create work in the area without the fear of not being able to afford a work space. In the case of Slung Low, Lane stated that an annual ACE grant of £99,000, primarily “pays for this venue [The HUB], which puts on a show every few months and hosts other people’s artistic processes” (Lane, 2016). From the tone of his words, it is clear that Lane sees it as his moral duty, and not just a part of fulfilling the company’s ACE contract, to help out artists who started in a similar situation to him; leaving university for example and not knowing where to start when it comes to having a creative career.

4.3.2 Opening Debate on the Theatre Company as Employer

In the opening chapter of this paper, the contentious opinion that a theatre company can not be a source of permanent employment for the artist was questioned, evidenced by a selection of theatre companies operating today, paying a small group of artists a regular salary; enough to support themselves and work for their companies as their sole career. The companies that operate in this way include Slung Low in Leeds, IOU in Halifax and HighTide in Suffolk, which are all National Portfolio Organisations and as such receive annual funding from ACE, subject to their eligibility, which is reviewed and then ideally renewed on a three year basis. This allows these companies to budget accordingly in order to pay for the running of their rehearsal facilities, expensive production costs and most crucially gives them the ability to pay their performers/technicians at least £500 per week (Lane and Wheeler, 2016), which is the current Equity minimum.

Whilst financial stability is of course integral in allowing the theatre company the means to actively create work, one question that the artist is likely to ask themselves when forming a company today is this- when can they afford to pursue theatre as a sole career and 'quit their day job?' HighTide's Francesca Clark describes her position as executive producer as "relatively secure" (Clark, 2016) and was under the impression that by pursuing her original goal of being an actress she would not have the same security. This is likely because arts administration careers are based much more in an office environment and unlike the role of performer are not subject to change based on the demands of the production. It is clear that whilst it is important to look at a practical level what the most relevant factors are in achieving this goal, the true issues are actually subtextual and represent more than just having an artistic job for life. In some ways, the answer to this question is led by the artist's desire to keep creating theatre work and in its most practical sense, the theatre company can be a place that offers financial security in a working environment that often regards artistic pursuits as lacking in that regard.

4.4. The Cultural Impact of Social Media in Theatre Company Promotion

Arts Council England, whilst noteworthy, is not the only resource available to the small theatre company seeking support. There is a growing network of support between theatre companies and local theatres that offer their venues at a reduced cost and- even more crucially- offer support and contacts. This may be down to the increased accessibility social media brings as contact information and advice can be more readily accessed than ever before. Social networking sites like Facebook offer the ability for artists to join groups (i.e: West Yorkshire Theatre Network), which immediately creates a link between amateurs, professionals and potential audiences allowing all groups the chance to “genuinely share thinking, promote discussion and look beyond the boundaries of the individual organisation” (Gardner, 2010).

The idea of mass marketing at little to no cost is what elevates the chance of success for the modern theatre company with only a few resources to hand, giving them the freedom to advertise freely for support, advice and publicity. Access to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other sites can be used as advertising tools allowing the user to share videos, photos, advertisements and any other media to increase the chances of reaching a wider audience than ever before. This also has an effect on reducing the financial strain a theatre company might otherwise face. Print publicity automatically costs money as it is produced practically and must be distributed as such; viral advertising costs are only limited by the user themselves and (unlike physical advertising) allow anyone to create a profile for their company completely free of charge. Social media also allows for a constant stream of advertising through retweets and regular posting through sites such as IFTTT, making it much more accessible for companies to keep reaching potential audiences and building up a level of visible supporters through ‘likes.’ Without money however, these social media

campaigns have their limitations as they can only reach those people already predisposed to patronising theatre companies and have little impact when it comes to garnering new audience members.

The most positive display of the community power of social media was evidenced in 2015 Twitter campaign #GisATenner (Red Ladder, 2015), after Leeds-based theatre company Red Ladder completely lost their ACE funding as a result of having been removed as an NPO. This led to a strong reaction from the company's online supporters in the area who decided to campaign for Red Ladder themselves by setting up the website www.saveredladder.co.uk with a pledge to raise £80,000 in order for the company to continue production on their next show. They described ACE's cuts as "a load of old tosh... given their fantastic reputation and the sustained quality of work they've put out for over the last 46 years" (Save Red Ladder, 2015) and it was predicted by the campaign that if all of Red Ladder's 8,000 Twitter followers pledged £10, the company would be able to recoup half of the funding they would have received as a former National Portfolio Organisation. However, whilst the idea of using an online list of followers to predict the amount of money that could be generated is well intentioned, it clearly has its limitations as the independent campaign (endorsed by Red Ladder) has so far fallen short of its target, raising only £30,000 to date. There are many reasons why a campaign of this nature might fail to gain traction but it can be inferred with certainty that just because a theatre company has a significant level of online support, it does not always transfer into real-world financial support. Therefore, social media campaigns and events, though useful for gauging interest and building a company's reputation, can not offer a theatre company any guarantees when it comes to generating revenue.

Whilst social media is the most current and accessible tool for marketing a theatre company's work, some prefer to rely on more personal methods such as crowdfunding events. This is a broad term that encompasses many different fundraising techniques but it often takes the form of an event or social gathering in order to raise support, knowledge and finances for a cause. Executive Producer of HighTide, Francesca Clark recalls the process of holding a social event like this when producing work to take to the Edinburgh festival when she was at university. She felt it important to clarify that "it was very much within the confines of being first year drama students as opposed to having a relationship with the Arts Council or anything like that. I think we did- I can't remember what it's called now- but like when you throw sponges at people for charity. We did a lot of that kind of stuff" (Clark, 2016). Events of this nature can be prudent in gaining support for a particular production, but even Clark concedes that it is not an avenue of funding she would pursue working with HighTide as it does not come under her job description as a producer. That isn't to say that she believes them to be irrelevant for modern theatre companies as when it comes to her independent work produced more recently, she found that holding a fundraiser was helpful and the event managed to raise around £5000 (Clark, 2016). However, her statement also highlighted the fact that a fundraiser is only effective in gathering interest if the circumstances are appropriate. For instance, a student drama society are more likely to generate an audience of students through fundraisers such as "parties" or "sponge-throwing" (Clark, 2016), as the environment is more appropriate and they are likely to have a more personal connection with members of the society participating in the production. If a professional company (post-university) were to hold similar events, they might risk creating a distraction from the work itself as the setting could be viewed as too relaxed or unprofessional to a potential group of investors.

4.4.1. Defining and Promoting a Theatre Company's 'Product'

Due to the nature of what theatre companies provide to an audience, it is sometimes difficult to determine what a company's "product" is. A theatre company's work may take the form of a show, installation, festival performance and may even cross into other territories, blurring the lines of what we might commonly refer to as theatre. It might not seem necessary for the artist who creates the work to find a label to describe it but it is important to clarify when it comes to trying to create effective marketing and secure funding for a company's work. Phil Wilmott Artistic Director of the Steam Industry argues that "as with trying to break into any saturated market you HAVE to have a USP (unique selling point) – ideally a VUSP (very unique selling point) – to make any impact" (Caines, 2013). However, John Britton stated his belief that a theatre company cannot be considered and operated in the same way as a normal business in the vein of "a bakery, a shop, [subsequently] a theatre company" (Britton, 2016) because company structures do not benefit the artist. Despite this, theatre companies such as Slung Low and IOU continue to deliver work to a variety of paying audiences and have been successful with many of their productions. A large part of this is creating original productions with the aim of generating paying audience members, which in theory would produce a significant amount of to pay back the costs of the production. In spite of this, many artists interviewed for this research stated that hardly any profit is generated through attracting paying audiences and for the subsidised theatre company's in this study, that is not their intention as they already have considerable financial support from a number of other sources. It can therefore be surmised that although complications can arise when the work a company produces is difficult to categorise, the fact is that many theatre companies of this nature are not reliant on ticket sales alone in order to reach their intended audience.

On some level, non-performer based installations can take the place of the theatre company's 'product' as they require either a paying audience or an initial paid commission to generate revenue and rarely require much work to maintain once established. Artistic Director of IOU, David Wheeler believes these to be the ideal way of generating income for his company as at the moment "it's very hard to book consecutive runs of shows, so performers have to go off and do other things" (Wheeler, 2016). Once a space is secured for an installation and the piece is created, the creative team of company's such as IOU can focus their free time on creating live productions while receiving the income from the ongoing installation. Installations of this nature that do not require constant maintenance or performers and also have the added benefit of carrying the theatre company's name, allowing it to remain in the minds of potential audience without having to pay for any additional marketing. Work of this nature can be initially very expensive and Wheeler himself suggested that it would not be possible to create large-scale installations without a significant source of funding (Wheeler, 2016).

As explored in the previously in this chapter, very few theatre companies generate enough income to produce the work they want to create through paying audiences and can not be considered to be purely commercial entities. Slung Low's Lane made clear that "the theatre company, part of the business, makes work for other people and that part of the company makes the profit" (Lane, 2016). Companies who work in a similar model to Slung Low appear to be most successful operating as more of a hybrid, receiving funding from organisations like ACE in order to maintain the costs of running the company and paying the artists who work with them. This directly contrasts Britton's belief that theatre company's cannot maintain an unencumbered artistic process and run commercially but does show that it cannot be achieved by selling a production in the same way a business sells their products. The most successful and longstanding companies operate on the

basis that some compromises of their vision might be necessary in order to reach their desired audiences, as it may be the only means in which they can keep producing more work in the future.

5.0

Identifying and Examining Theatre Company Structures

It could be said that for the newly emerging artist, the UK theatre scene is a thriving yet seemingly complex business environment in which to start producing their own work. There are hundreds of professional theatre companies operating to date; all varying in scale, budget, members and objectives. As discussed in the previous chapter, for some, the idea of forming their own theatre company is a way of granting themselves control over their own careers by creating a self-sufficient business structure that allows them to choose the type of work that is produced (both original and pre-existing), a choice of the conditions in which this work is created and in turn have a bigger stake in any potential profits made in the process. However whilst this ownership of power and control claimed by the artist has its clear benefits, it does not come without risk, responsibility or burden; with the term success gradually becoming much harder to determine for some companies than others.

As opposed to the previous chapter that focused on the methods the artist can utilise to support the running of a theatre company, this section presents a categorisation of different operational structures and identifies the positive and negative aspects of running a theatre company in each way. It is by no means an exhaustive list of all the forms in which a company can be structured, but instead a way of categorising important elements in the fundamental running of a theatre company. In conjunction with this, this chapter will take a look at how some contemporary artists view their own creative success; further analysing to what extent this and how the accompanying ethical and moral dilemmas can affect the trajectory of an artist's career.

5.1. Commercial Theatre Companies

In 2010, the playwright Mark Ravenhill derided the belief that artistic organisations should begin to operate in the same way a business does, finding the idea that this would encourage a competitive market for the arts completely laughable. He continues by predicting that every company would be forced to focus more heavily on marketing themselves, stating:

The message of the marketing department is: "Buy my product, not theirs." Inevitably, there's an "arms race" aspect to this: if I spend £10,000 a week on marketing (not an unusual sum for a medium-sized arts organisation), my competitor will have to spend £11,000 a week to be competitive, which means that next year I will have to spend £12,000 a week (and increase the size of my staff) (Ravenhill, 2010).

The idea of theatre being a competitive enterprise is not a new concept, with large producers such as Delfont-Mackintosh and the Michael Grandange Company continuing to dominate the West End as they have been doing for decades, owning a combined ten performance venues between them (Delfont-Mackintosh, n.d). However, small theatre companies rarely operate in the same way as these producing houses as they rarely own their own venues and it is often difficult to generate large audiences for multiple performances without the profile of a larger company. There are some companies however that do not receive funding from any organisation, therefore as they are not subsidised, by default they must be categorised as commercial enterprises. This is a difficult position to be in for the emerging company, as it leaves them with fewer guaranteed resource

networks besides from those working within the company itself and as a result, becomes difficult for them to create a financial plan for the future without an assured income.

The extent to which there are purely commercial theatre companies in the UK has rarely come into question, but reports such as ACE's *The Interdependence of Public and Private Finance in British Theatre* suggest that it is impossible to completely distinguish between subsidised theatre and commercial as the theatre industry on the whole "is a complex structure of interdependent parts in which each, whether small or large, is active and essential to its whole function" (Hetherington, 2015). In the report, Hetherington points out that it is difficult to completely generalise but most producers, theatre makers and venues operate as a hybrid and receive funding from more than one source. However, in contrast to this, the author found there to be a belief amongst the participants in his study that stated "their work would "continue or perhaps prosper" if all public theatre funding was removed" (Hetherington and Hutchinson, 2015). This suggests that, due to the broad nature of the research attempting to encompass all of British Theatre, there is somewhat of a divide between what is theoretically possible and what is practically achieved in the UK theatre industry when it comes to operating as a commercial entity.

In the context of the structural nature of theatre companies in this country it is therefore prudent to ask, are there any companies who currently operate on a completely commercial basis? In order to effectively answer this question, the ways in which commercial theatre companies generate their income, in theory, must be identified. The first way in which this can be recognised and the most obvious is through audience ticket sales. This has been an established method of generating finances ever since the inception of venues such as the Globe in the late 1500s, who commissioned theatre companies such as The Lord Chamberlain's Men to perform their work for a collective fee

of £10 (Hetherington, 2015). The payment granted to the company came primarily from audience footfall, as historical records indicate that this formed the majority of the theatre's income at the time. This guaranteed level of patronage however only lasted for so long, as Hetherington points out that "increasing reliance on the Caroline Court [under the reign of James I] blunted their creative edge such that their popular audience, and with it their financial independence, gradually deserted them" (Hetherington, 2015). This ever increasing dependance on commissions from the royal court marks a significant turning point in the history of commercial theatre, demonstrating a connection between external subsidy leading to artistic compromise and, as a result, sharply dropping audience numbers. According to historian Jane Moody this created a divide between sponsored theatres and "illegitimate" theatres (Hetherington, 2015), who along with the companies that created productions for them sought out other, more questionable, methods to generate revenue. It is therefore clear that, whilst commercial theatre companies may in theory be mostly self-sufficient, they have often received funding from other sources in order to make up for a growing lack of audience support.

The second way in which the commerciality of a theatre company can be measured is by looking at the company's original intentions and in particular, finding information on what basis it was originally formed. According to *Stage Money*, to determine the nature of a company's commerciality, two key features can be identified. The creative team needs to have been either 1). "Typically formed as a partnership or company to produce one play only and then disband" or 2). "A production is often planned as an open-ended run, playing for as long as ticket sales support it" (Donahue and Patterson, 2012). Whilst this is not the case for all commercial theatre companies, it is an appropriate way of understanding the initial structure of a theatre company when they originally formed. To contextualise this there are a number of companies, including Slung Low, who originally began without an

ethos or particular plan for the productions they wanted to create. As Lane described it, the original group was “a bunch of people just leaving university who wanted to start a theatre company but didn’t have any sense of what that meant” (Lane, 2016). Slung Low however, whilst they do attract paying audiences, is heavily subsidised by ACE through the NPO programme, strongly suggesting that they are not and in Lane’s opinion, can never be profitable as a purely commercial enterprise.

In terms of the modern UK theatre industry, there is still a significant proportion of income generated by ticket sales. The aforementioned Arts Council England commissioned study and the contemporaneous report from The Stage both state that “analysis of recent sales data suggests that, of the £2.2 billion income in the commercial sector, ticket sales make up 91% (£2.1 billion)” (Hetherington, 2015). Looking at these figures, it is much more difficult to distinguish what percentage of *companies* are funded on commercial income alone as it only provides a general overview of the theatre industry as a whole. Looking at specific examples such as the recently formed Andrew McCabe Productions (AMP), it could be argued that the only theatre companies producing work in the commercial sector already come from established theatre backgrounds such as AMP. The producer’s previous work were either already established large musicals on Broadway such as *Wicked* or high profile star-led plays such as The Young Vic’s *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Gillian Anderson in the lead role (AMP, 2016). This demonstrates a deep inequality between the companies that have been formed by previously established artists with the means to profit from a commercial venture and the newly formed companies that are looking for a way to begin building both a sustainable career and an artistic reputation.

While there are many self-sufficient venues currently being run successfully (Lee, 2011), it is difficult to find recent examples of theatre companies who operate purely on audience

revenue, as they either no longer actively create work due to a lack of funds or are supported by some form of subsidy or another. Unless the emerging theatre maker is “a rich boy” (Britton, 2016), as Britton remarked on earlier in this paper, most commercial theatre productions are a far cry from the modest budget a new theatre company would be likely to start producing work with. Therefore, in establishing a theatre company from scratch, pursuing a commercial model without additional support would not likely be profitable due to the unreliability of audience footfall and the ever-increasing production costs involved. However, if a theatre company wished to operate on a commercial basis and stay away from funding by public organisations, there are other resources that may be currently available to them.

5.1.1. Accepting Corporate Sponsorship

In the United Kingdom, there are currently 179 theatre companies who receive regular funding from the national organisation Arts Council England (Arts Council England, 2015). There are countless others who have either been denied funding from the national organisation or who have little interest in working with them, so must rely on other sources in order to make their work financially viable. Corporate sponsorship is intrinsically linked to the success of commercial theatre and for those who have access to this resource, private funding has its considerable advantages. In addition to this, some companies with a considerable public profile have on some occasions chosen to pursue private organisations as the main method of garnering support, which can often be a valuable way of immediately raising finances and publicity for a project. It does however raise a set of significant ethical questions as to the nature of the organisation offering their sponsorship, in particular what effect this backing might have on the social reputation of a theatre company and to what extent these decisions can impact wider society as a whole.

On April 27th 2017, climate change “actor-vists” stepped onto the stage and interrupted an RSC performance of *Anthony and Cleopatra* to protest the company’s relationship with the oil company BP (Masso, 2017). The sponsorship deal was offered by BP in order for the theatre in which the company are based to offer a £5 ticket deal for young people who might not otherwise be able to afford to see a production. During the protest, Phoebe Demeger claimed “as a lifelong lover of Shakespeare and a member of the RSC Key scheme for 16 to 25-year-olds, I am deeply saddened that young people’s access to great theatre must be tainted by an oil company that directly profits from compromising our collective future” (Masso, 2017). The protest was organised and peaceful but the key message was delivered to its intended audience by holding up a programme of the evening’s performance and crucially to a sponsored page which featured the face of William Shakespeare integrated with BP’s logo and more information on the organisation below. As the RSC are also recipients of ACE funding, this makes the issue even more problematic and it is clear that the protesters in this case had a passionate objection to the company’s endorsement of BP and saw it in some ways as a misuse of public funds. Demeger contextualised her beliefs on the issue by concluding that “it’s not worth betraying your political values for less than 0.5% of your annual income” (Masso, 2017). A representative of the RSC vehemently disagreed with the protesters remarks, stating that “the scheme is highly valued by our audiences and helps us establish lifetime enthusiasts for Shakespeare and live theatre. Since 2013, we have sold more than 62,000 tickets thanks to BP’s support” (Masso, 2017).

Significant opposition to this corporate relationship comes from Duende’s John Britton who suggested that those setting up a theatre company seriously need to question what their ideological reasons are for doing so. Britton states that ideology not profit should be at the

heart of a theatre company's structure, arguing that "if you have a vision for a kind of art or a kind of renegotiation of the relationship with audience or perhaps, as I do, a vision towards other forms of politics then to try and turn that into a company structure alongside other company structures... to be assimilated into the system requires you to be a conformist" (Britton, 2016). He continues to state that there is nothing inherently wrong with this but that it is not an opinion that he holds himself as he is more interested in letting creative demands direct the course of the company. This exposes the biggest flaw in pursuing a theatre company in a commercial sense, as it demonstrates that the pursuit of artistic development or social change to some degree is always at the centre of a company's conception and as such requires some moral compromises. This is of course a subjective opinion and the moral ramifications of certain decisions regarding the process of creating artistic work can only be decided by the individual.

The RSC's sponsorship ties with BP is an example of corporate sponsorship on a large scale and it is unlikely that companies with a smaller public profile would face the same level of protest. Each of these choices has an ethical impact and, it is clear that whichever organisation a company aligns itself with they are essentially offering public support and endorsement. IOU Theatre in Halifax have secured funding from a number of "Corporate Supporters" from a variety of business in order to develop their rehearsal space and build an additional facility which will be "an IOU Art School (from 2018 onwards) and will house an accessible, historically important archive of IOU's 40 year legacy of work" (IOU, n.d.). Some of IOU's sponsors include the architecture and interior design company Gagarin, which is currently in the process of developing the space described above for the theatre company (Gagarin, 2016). On an ideological level, Gagarin and IOU share similarities as they both have an interest in reinventing spaces (physical and creative) and work in the same local area with a direct, stated link to members of that community. Artistic Director of

IOU, David Wheeler, described the shift towards corporate funding as a necessary direction for the company to move in being that ACE funding is re-assessed on a three year basis and could be removed if they do not meet the current criteria. Wheeler later suggested that “the challenge for IOU in the future is to convince more private organisations to invest in their non-conventional, high risk projects in order to continue reaching their target audiences from production to production”, further stating that if the organisation was not one he had moral qualms with, he would be more than happy to have more sponsors in the makeup of the company’s board (Wheeler, 2016).

It is clear that IOU has aligned itself with organisations that offer more than just financial support but also provides a vital and mutual service. This demonstrates an artistic level of ideological similarity from both parties and an understanding of the benefits a relationship of likeminded companies can have. In the case of the RSC, choosing which organisations to accept support from shows how morally subjective this process can be and shows the responsibility the decisions all theatre companies have on a much wider social scale when they choose to receive sponsorship or funding from an organisation. Corporate sponsorship may not always be an accessible resource for the newly formed theatre company and the most lucrative opportunities are likely to be offered to theatre companies with a strong public reputation. However, looking at the two previous examples, it is evident that there is a sliding scale from large theatre companies receiving funding from successful corporate organisations to smaller ones working with local businesses to form a mutually beneficial relationship.

5.2. The Theatre Company as Facilitator for Social Change

As it has become clear from the previous section, the idea of the theatre company operating as a commercial business is a complicated one and as such has its detractors. Commerciality is certainly a contentious field as it is largely measured in financial terms in order to make the work marketable and ultimately profitable. The ethical implications of this has already been explored but Britton notes that whilst the financial stability of a company is important, profit should not be central to a company's purpose. He questions the fundamental motivation of starting a theatre company by stating "you [the artist] might want to question if you're setting up a performance company or whether you're in fact setting up a social enterprise which operates through art" (Britton, 2016). This question is certainly at the heart of a company's reason for existing, but to what extent does moral responsibility have on the longevity of a theatre company and how important is it to create work that has a positive social impact?

This idea of theatre companies producing a level of social engagement through their work is not new and can arguably be dated back to the 1960s and 70s wherein the rise of alternative theatre companies such as Gay Sweatshop and Black Theatre Co-Operative sought to bring more representation to minority groups through their productions (McAvinchey, pg4: 2014). This gradual process of the politicisation of theatre allowed these companies to experiment with different ways of engaging with communities facing similar issues and through methods such as applied theatre, they created the opportunity to raise debate on topics as varied as homelessness, prisoners' rights and the refugee crisis to name but a few. Whilst issue-led companies often have a clear intention in the work they create, there is rarely a consideration into the profitability of the work as it is not the primary focus of these companies. The desire to generate income is led by the desire

to influence social development in some way and financial gain is simply a way to continue doing so.

To some extent, theatre makers make ethical decisions in everything they do but this section will examine the structure that these core set of principles can be channeled into in order to directly have an influence on social change. Through a variety of different forms, theatre companies have approached their work with the intention of engaging with a particular community or social demographic and as previously stated do not necessarily seek to make a profit through their work. As such, they either rely on some form of subsidy (which has been explored in the last chapter) and must operate in a different structure to that of the commercial theatre company. Although there a number of forms social engagement can take, in the context of currently active theatre companies, these have been broken down into two distinct categorisations: theatre companies who are legally registered charities or theatre companies who identify as social enterprises.

5.2.1. Theatre Companies with Charity Status

Some theatre companies whose work is driven by a strong ideological set of principles have chosen to register themselves as charitable organisations. Unlike a commercial company that is most likely to be registered as limited and owned by a board of individuals, the makeup of a charity theatre company is significantly different. A charity is not owned in the commercial sense “but in the care of a board of trustees” (Gomito, n.d.), who have the job of keeping a check on the company’s day to day operations; working towards their collective goals.

Not every single theatre company however qualifies as a charity as the main criteria for achieving this status is that the company “must have ‘charitable purposes’ that help the public” (gov.uk, n.d.) and are intended to check that all companies who want to be granted charity status are doing so with a specific set of ethics in mind and not just using it as a way of generating donations to develop work commercially. This is regulated by The Charities Act of 2011 and the potential charity is tasked with proving what public benefit their work has and providing evidence of this where possible (gov.uk, n.d.). The way in which a theatre company’s viability as a charity is addressed is through the following aims:

- the relief of poverty
- the advancement of education
- the advancement of religion
- other purposes beneficial to the community (NODA, 2013).

If a theatre company is granted charity status, the main benefit of operating in this way is the donation process that charities are built on, which allows for followers of a company or the cause they represent to donate money to them in order to support their future work. On a practical level, the money donated to the company is tax deductible, meaning that every single donation is allowed to be kept in full by as long as they continue to meet the legal requirements of charity status (gov.uk, n.d.).

In some cases charity status allows theatre companies, such as Bradford based company Mind the Gap, to improve the way in which a cross-section of society is represented in the work they produce and the impact that has on the audiences who engage with them. Mind the Gap’s primary vision “is to work in an arts sector where there is equal opportunity for performers with learning disabilities: a world where performers are trained, respected and

employed equally, and feature every day on our stages and screens” (Mind the Gap, n.d.). In order to achieve this aim, the company also receive funding from Bradford City Council and ACE but it is their charity status that arguably has the most impact as it allows for their audiences to support them themselves. On their website, Mind the Gap state that by making a one off donation to the company “you [the audience member] are making an invaluable investment in our work”, further remarking that “all donations will be invested directly into the activities and opportunities we provide” (Mind the Gap, n.d.). It is this direct engagement between the audience and a theatre companies that charity status accentuates and is at it’s best when a theatre company create a genuine bridge between an under-represented or misrepresented societal group and the audience, who in turn offer financial support which continues this cycle.

If a theatre company does not have a particular ethos or goal to affect social change on some level, it could be argued that the criteria for achieving charity status can be restrictive to the creative process. This is because by definition “an arts charity must adhere to its objects: not producing pure entertainment which has no perceivable educational value or engaging in permanent trading activities” (NODA, 2013). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that for the emerging artist, charity status can offer a great deal of support but only if the work they create has a recognisable ideology a strong desire to make a positive impact on society.

5.2.2. The Structure of Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are another potential way of giving a theatre company the platform to affect social change by collaborating with other organisations such as businesses. It is important to clarify that unlike a charity a “social enterprise is not a legal term, but an

approach. The phrase is used to describe businesses that exist for a social purpose” (Social Enterprise UK). The way this essentially takes place is through the selling of goods and services with the aim of making a profit that will be guaranteed to be channeled back into a charitable company that can utilise this money in a variety of ways. If successful, this “allows them to tackle social problems, improve people’s life chances, support communities and help the environment. So when a social enterprise profits society profits” (Social Enterprise UK, n.d).

There is a degree of cross-over between social enterprises and charities and a theatre company can indeed be classed as both. However, the biggest advantage of the social enterprise model is that it allows for the emerging theatre company to transcend the traditional commercial structure and still be led by a set of moral and ethical principles. There is no set way in which these companies need to operate and there is evidence to suggest that social enterprises are more successful when experimenting with the expected conventions of a business. Grimm and Co. for example, a “magical apothecary” (Parkes, 2016) and children’s writing group based in Rotherham, operate in a unique and interesting way in order to engage children in a unexpected and imaginative way. The business element comes from the venue itself, which is a functional shop that sells mystical looking objects to members of the public. In addition to receiving funding from the local council and any proceeds that come from their status as a registered charity, the business element supplements their income and helps towards the running costs of their educational workshops. Headteacher Kevan Cadman who led a group of children remarked that the benefits of this form of engagement were much more than just developing writing skills, stating that “a lot of our children don’t have imaginative play when they’re little... it’s developing a rounded person” (Parkes, 2016).

This is clear evidence that social enterprises can be a significant way of improving social development in the form of arts-based companies but in the case of theatre companies, the way in which this approach is enacted is less black and white because it essentially follows a system that focuses on addressing a social issue or demographic than by selling merchandise. Fourth Wall for example, a theatre company and social enterprise based in Birmingham, advertise themselves as a “development agency using theatre and the arts to up-skill children and young people aged 5-25” (Fourth Wall, n.d.). Similarly to Grimm and Co, Fourth Wall’s main focus is to develop the social, educational and performance skills of young people however as they do not have a business element to create financial revenue, they need to forge relationships with other funding bodies. Founder Dan Bridgewater stated that the key to this was similar to attempting to attract commercial investors and that the central method for doing this is to “communicate these [ideological] objectives within your marketing, and take advantage of them when looking for funding” (Caines, 2013).

These examples demonstrate a transition for some theatre companies from a more recognisable company structure into an organisation that operates on a number of different levels and in a number of different ways. Different projects, not just productions, are formed in order to have a significant impact on wider society whilst also giving them the means to continue to create other work with guaranteed financial partners in place to support them.

It should be stated that although this approach is fundamentally led by a wish to improve the lives of a social group or highlight a particular issue, it is still essentially driven by capitalistic incentives either through significant company profit which is unlikely or by reaching out to other funding organisations in order to make their goals financially

achievable. Like many of the other structures examined throughout this research, it is clear that social enterprises cannot operate on profit alone and must seek out additional subsidy in order to continue to work in this way.

5.3. The Theatre Company as Co-Operative

In the first two structures that have been examined thus far, there is a clear hierarchy of leadership with each structure requiring a form of higher management (i.e. director, company board etc.) and a group of followers who benefit from their decisions (i.e. a group of performers, social demographic etc.). An alternative structure is that of the co-operative theatre company, which has its roots in the experimental fringe companies from the late 1960s (Bull, pg72: 2017). The idea behind this working system is that every member of the company has an equal role and a say in the running of it, with no one person taking precedent over another. This is radically different to other company structures examined in this chapter so far as it places focus on the collaborative element of producing live theatre in a systematic sense and not just during the artistic process. According to passionate advocate of the co-operative system Thomas Griffin:

The old model is egocentric and pits one person in competition with another for our basic human needs. Everyday—in the current system—there are thousands of unemployed artists forced to compete with each other for a small portion of the available resources in order to meet these needs. By working cooperatively, we can not only change that situation, we can also teach (through modelling) our audiences how to live in a world where all humans have the right to meet their basic needs. And isn't that one of the central roles of artists in any society? (Griffin, 2012).

Griffin uses the term “old model” to insinuate that the popular commercial structures are the most traditional, but this term is in fact contentious as co-operative theatre companies can be dated back to the mid 20th century and could arguably be viewed as more

traditional than the current structures, which as explored previously, have merged and adapted into less easily recognised structures in recent years.

In 1976, IOU Theatre was established by a group of artists from a range of creative disciplines with the intent of creating live theatre that incorporated elements of other media including fine art, poetry, music, movement and more (Middleton and Moss, accessed 13/05/2017). When creating their work, IOU were not consciously attempting to label it in any one genre and were much more fascinated with the process of creating work, with an outlook to working together without being precious or protective over the individual's input. Wheeler described a scenario early on in the formation of IOU wherein he himself was creating some form of sculpture and another member of the company walked up to him, took it and started to deconstruct it- adding their own elements to it (Wheeler, 2016). Rather than seeing this as an artistic intrusion, Wheeler found that this level of ongoing collaboration was central to IOU's experimentation of form and process, typifying the ethos of the alternative artistic movement of the decade. In offering a sense of this movement, in which IOU grew from, Middleton and Moss quote Craig, stating that so called 'alternative theatre' "became a social seismograph of the seventies, registering long-buried underground pressures well before they rose to the surface of social life. And in this process of expression, it helped to bring into existence hidden exploratory ways of feeling and perception" (Craig 1980: p9). IOU's early years were informed by this working structure and set of artistic principles; with the company's formation stemming from a broader artistic and social movement.

It should be stated that IOU's inclusion in this section may seem contradictory to the casual observer, as they have earlier been categorised in this research as a commercial entity. To clarify, they have been included in both sections to demonstrate the process of

adaptation many theatre companies will more than likely be faced with, especially if they have the same longevity of career that IOU have had. In the context of the social movement of 1970s, it is clear that the co-operative structure was intrinsically linked to the period as it was based in a democratic, artistic and social ideology which allowed for all creatives involved to have an equal responsibility in the making of the work, as well as having significant involvement in the operational development of the company. However, according to the company's founder and Artistic Director David Wheeler, over the last 30 years, they have had to shed the co-operative structure in favour of a more commercial one- a move in part due to the commitments of the original artists in the company, who for various reasons had to move on to other projects. In David Wheeler's own words the cooperative was very much "of it's time" (Wheeler, 2016) and it is arguably a system that flourished because of the experimental attitudes of artists of the period. The aspiring artist may therefore be asking themselves, how possible is it to take the cooperative structure that has been successful for companies in the past and apply it to my theatre company operating today?

Looking at the evidence, there are very few companies who have elected to adopt the co-operative structure currently in the UK, however there are a number of ideological principles at the core of this movement that could inform the running of the 21st century theatre company. For instance, when The Joint Stock Theatre Company were formed in 1974, two years prior to the formation of IOU, they aimed to create new plays "infused with a democratic spirit" (Ritchie, 1987: p11) that typified their working methods. This culminated in plays such as *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (1978), based on the novel by Robert Tressell detailing the lives and political ambitions of a group of working class decorators. Through material of this nature, we are able to draw clear comparisons between the company's own working process categorised as "a refusal to adopt fixed

principles governing the choice of project” (Ritchie, 1987: p12) and the democratic structure in place which has been criticised by some as just another form of creating art by committee. At the time of writing, Joint Stock is no longer an active theatre company, as the original creative team have moved onto other projects. The results of the company however speak for themselves and during Joint Stock’s most prolific years, they jointly authored a number of successful plays that have continued to be revived and performed to this day, showing that whilst the company may not have sustained itself into this century it has still succeeded in creating longevity with the work they have created.

As with many of the previous companies mentioned in this research, for Joint Stock “the desire to create plays that tackled large public themes required physical and financial resources beyond the reach of the average fringe unit” (Ritchie, 1987: p13) and in 1977 the company were awarded their first grant of £40,000 from ACE in order to fund the majority of their process and pay the creative team accordingly (Ritchie, 1987: p19). This suggests that whilst co-operative and collective theatre companies can successfully create work in an alternative structure to the commercial, they must still require some form of financial subsidy. This may be viewed as a systematic compromise for some artists, but for those willing to accept financial support from an organisation such as ACE, it can be a useful way of supplementing a company structure that is not reliant on a part of the commercial system.

6.0

Conclusion

In the pursuit of forming a theatre company, it is clear that there are a number of factors that need addressing in order for the emerging artists of today to distinguish a clear pathway. The UK theatre landscape is an ever changing one, with many social and political restraints creating a difficult environment for those wishing to produce theatre and have a financially stable career at the same time. However the evidence suggests that whilst this is indeed a complex task, on some level, it can be achieved. Whilst the reader is encouraged to read their own conclusions by finding personal resonance in the research presented, the following will present a brief overview of the findings of this research from a broader perspective in an attempt to answer the central question of this thesis: how possible is it to form a theatre company and use that structure to pursue a career in the current socio-political landscape?

Thus so far, a case has been made that a theatre company can not continue to produce work for very long without a sound set of ethical principles and a business structure in place to support it. Companies like IOU Theatre and Red Ladder have both been operating for over thirty years and, through adaptation and foresight, have continued to produce work successfully, reaching different audiences in the process. In broad terms, this could be viewed as a standard example of ultimate success for the theatre company as these companies have reached a level sustainability and maintained a prolific output of creative work. The emerging theatre company can learn a lot from the challenges that companies like Red Ladder have faced as although they had been financial sustainable due to their National Portfolio Organisation status, the removal of this in 2015 led the company to

reach out to their social media followers in order to regain some of the funds for already planned projects. This is an emerging resource available to the modern theatre company and whilst it has its limitations (Red Ladder did not succeed in raising back their desired £80,000), Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are all invaluable ways of maintaining a personal relationship between an audience and the company.

As has been examined, Arts Council England (ACE) has historically been the main source of support for emerging theatre companies but in recent years, their role and social responsibility in granting funding has come under increasing scrutiny by some artists, for example Duende's John Britton who fundamentally disagree with their overarching political ties to the current government in relation to their military action in Syria. Artists like Britton believe that by "assimilating themselves into the system" (Britton, 2016), they are producing work that indirectly supports a political regime they vehemently oppose and as a result would rather look to other funding resources to gain support for their creative process. It can be surmised that an individual artists political alignment has a direct affect on the likelihood of their theatre company surviving, as it is a subjective choice when deciding if to accept funding from a particular organisation- either private or public. It is more likely that for the emerging artists who have a strong social or political ethos will find it more difficult to find financial support for their work as they will be less likely to sacrifice their personal beliefs for the sake of sustaining a career.

Despite this, through prolific funding programmes such as Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts, newly established theatre companies can apply for individual funding for a project. This has an invaluable impact on supporting initial foundations of a new theatre company as it is the catalyst for producing an artist who understands how to utilise the finances available to them, in turn putting this knowledge back into the industry and

demonstrating to other in his own work how others may do the same. It is this initial support from the country's most influential funding organisation that has the most impact in creating a new generation of theatre companies by giving them an initial start and supporting them through the process on both a financial and operational level. Company's such as Slung Low started through an individual Grants for the Arts payment of £4000 (Lane, 2016) which allowed them to start paying their members and as a result kickstarted the careers of theatre makers such as Alan Lane and his team. In order to meet the public benefit criteria for ACE funding, companies more often than not offer their resources such as rehearsal space and advice to the emerging artists, which is a directly engaging way of building relationships between members of the artistic community on every level. Ravenhill describes this relationship as the key to maintaining artistic success, rhetorically asking "What's the solution? I believe we can find another co-operative model, one in which public arts organisations come together to promote their work and build new audiences. This would be considerably cheaper [than the commercial structure] But it would also mean a new way of thinking, a paradigm shift away from the model of arts organisation as individual business unit" (Ravenhill, 2010). Therefore, whilst it is important to have systems in place that offer financial support to the new company, it is equally as important for the already established companies to provide a level of outreach, ultimately creating a connection of theatre companies that are inter-dependant but also reliant on each other for financial, artistic and social support.

However, for the emerging artist who does not have a particular ideological foundation for their work, they would likely find themselves in an unclear position as to how to pursue forming a theatre company. The initial issue with this approach is that there are no commercial or subsidised structures that can be easily adopted, as the working process is less focused on an inherent plan but more on the development of the work itself. Through

the course of this research, it is clear that there are very few companies that operate today without the drive to enact social change on some level as it the desire to create work without a focus on where the finance support for doing this comes from is simply too vague. As a result of this, artists such as Official Culture's Josh Guiry who started with a strong political impetus to create work found that whilst individual project funding from less obvious sources such as a Labour trade union was an option, it was not enough to support the longevity for their work and unfortunately they are no longer active as a theatre company. It can be therefore concluded that without a specific infrastructure, a theatre company is not likely to be a sustainable form of career as it is this level of oversight and planning that determines the financial options available to them.

Alan Lane stated that it is important for the theatre maker to know that organisations such as ACE do not exist to fund everybody's artistic ventures as they have a limited budget to fulfil their goals. He suggested that his biggest mistake in originally applying for funding was that "I didn't talk about the audience, I didn't talk about the effect on the public, I just wanted to make a play and they were like "Why would we give you £10,000 to make a play"? Whereas they would give that money to develop artists and that was a more convincing argument" (Lane, 2016). Therefore, for a theatre company to be financially stable, it is important to understand which organisations will fund what types of work and be willing to compromise on this or find another way of funding. Lane further stated that in the future this is unlikely to change and if, as a society, we want ACE to operate differently we should "write to our MP's and stop asking the Arts Council for money" (Lane, 2016).

Whilst this research has suggested potential theatre company structures an emerging theatre company could use as a model, due to the multidimensional nature of the UK theatre industry, it is important to note that there is a key limitation of making absolute

judgements on these structures due to a varied number of factors that define and affect them. It can therefore be concluded that because of this complex environment, it is important for the emerging theatre company to have a sense of their individual role in the whole process- from conception to producing applications for funding and creating a production- furthermore channelling this into a career. This research has endeavoured to provide a practical basis for this and by looking at advice and the careers of modern theatre makers, hopes to stand as an accessible resource in the pursuit of those forming theatre companies.

Examining the landscape as a whole, it is clear that artists who wish to form a successful theatre company also need to branch out from the role of performer/director/creator and become advertisers, social media ambassadors and fundraisers as well. HighTide's Francesca Clark echoed this statement by suggesting that "if you love marketing, fundraising, the technical side of it there are absolutely jobs out there for you. Unless we bring back the rep system where we have actors on a permanent pay roll, I don't see how that's going to change" (Clark, 2016). It is undoubtedly the case that because of the rapid adopting of social media in our daily lives, the landscape theatre makers face is markedly different than that of the last few decades. It is not simply enough to create posters, hand out flyers and put on a production anymore as this is no longer the way audiences respond to theatre makers. Regardless of the genre of work theatre companies produce, it is still important to maintain this engagement with members of the public as it is a widely used resource that can be used to form both personal and professional relationships key to producing successful theatre.

It has long been thought that artistic careers will never truly offer a guarantee of success and to an extent this is correct. Due to the many financial, structural and perhaps even

legal requirements a modern theatre company has to fulfil, it could be argued that the nature of the theatre maker has evolved into part advertiser, part administrator in the sense that the most successful companies know which structure and organisations to reach out to in order for them to have the resources to create their own work. As suggested throughout this paper, the socio-political landscape in this country is ever shifting and it is important for the theatre-maker to retain a sense of personal identity in the work they create. As ACE funding criteria changes this may be a difficult task but if the emerging theatre maker can adapt to this and understand what role they have in the process, they can indeed form a theatre company and by rallying the appropriate organisations and utilising the increasing artistic support network around them, they have a much higher chance of turning their artistic/social venture into a successful career.

Appendixes

Interview with Alan Lane (Transcribed)

Jacob Pratt: So, the first question is did you attend university or drama school prior to creating your own work?

Alan Lane: Yes. I went to the University of Sheffield and studied English Literature from 1997-2000.

JP: Ok, fantastic. Starting out did your company have a specific ethos in mind?

AL: No but I think the development of Slung Low is slightly complicated in the sense that we started in 2000 as a bunch of people just leaving university who wanted to start a theatre company but didn't have any sense of what that meant or even what a theatre company would do except that we enjoyed making theatre and then we went through a period of transformation until about 10 years ago when we became the company we are now. By which I mean we were looking to have people who didn't already think theatre was brilliant to come and see us as an audience, we were looking to create adventures for audiences that didn't mean sitting down in the dark in the theatre and Slung Low's ethos has been with us for a decade. But before that there was at least 5 years of us sitting around and being particularly shit. But I think that partly is because when we graduated we were the first in our families to go to university, there was none of that to fall back on, we didn't know anyone in the theatre so we had 5 years of stumbling around on our own. So I think the answer to your question is both yes and no but when we essentially started no but we have been driven by a set of ethics for a long time.

JP: Would you mind talking about the bumbling side of things? What kind of things did you go about to start the company?

AL: So the marketing we did was realise that only the university had any interest, and it was only a passing interest, in us being a theatre company and the outside world needed a theatre company liked it needed a hole in the head. So we suddenly stuck to the university for a while and there was a few lecturers there who had written plays who wanted them producing and then there was the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the National Student Drama Festival for the first year and we decided to get work done wherever possible and that led us in the end to Ellis Theatre (?) which was really good in meeting a man named Ian Bloomfield who introduced us to Theatre in the Mill in Bradford which was really vital but before that there was a three or four year period where it was about putting work on where we could which was in the local student theatre when the students didn't want to use it and using what little status we had as graduates to boss those people around and then go to Edinburgh.

JP: Great, thank you. How did you get funding and publicity for your first piece of work?

AL: We didn't get funding for quite a lot, funding came to us quite late. After about 3 years we met with the arts council who very firmly said why on earth would we give you money? But for the first 5 years we were relatively funding free. For publicity we just printed and put up posters. I remember I used to work in a warehouse which would give me enough money for the printing.

JP: So, this was around 2000?

AL: 2000-2005 was the time when we were really making work for no money and the first bit of funding we got was from accommodation in kind from Theatre in the Mill after about 5 years.

JP: Right, so you were really slogging away for 5 years before you got anything. That's interesting. And this is before social media was so accessible.

AL: Yeah, I mean the internet had just really started and Facebook and Twitter didn't really exist when I was a student.

JP: Did you pay the other performers and technicians in the company after your first production? I mean this is probably slightly different because you're all on a more even level.

AL: Yeah and even now the company- I mean I'm now 37 so what the kids I think nowadays refer to as ancient- but we're all on a company wage, everybody who works for this company gets paid the same and that's been true since the first thing we did when nobody got paid anything. And ever since then everybody has marched in step. And there was a time when we didn't have any money to pay but we could afford to pay for people's trains and another time when we could pay for people's trains and a pizza and now everybody is on a company wage (everyone gets paid £500 a week) and everyone gets paid for every bit of work they do. We have very little work experience that is free and even then it tends to be through university courses. But yeah, everybody gets £100 a day is how it works out.

JP: So in terms of nobody getting paid anything to how it works now, what are your views on how far you've come from there? There must have been a place in between-

AL: Yeah there is and I remember there were four shows back to back in 2008 which if you took all the fees from that and spread it together you could be paid £125 a week. Which at the time was like wow but now I look back on that and think- how did we eat? I think two things have changed which are for a long time we were making work for nobody else's benefit but our own. We were making work because that is what we wanted to do, we were making work because we said we were gonna be a theatre company and that is what we had to do and that's not really true anymore. I'm very lucky in that I get to make the work I want more or less but I make the work in the context of what other people want me to do. So we're gonna make something for the National Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme. Now, the Battle of the Somme has to be commemorated and they could do it in a number of different ways and they've chosen in this instance to do it by asking me. So they'll pay me for that. And we're opening the portal to the ferry world for the RSC and RSC will pay me for that. See, I'm doing pretty much anything I want to do and when I want to do it but I'm providing a service for other people. I think that's what changed. I think when we realised we've never been a box office company and when we attempted to earn money by having enough people through door and they pay for tickets- that's not what we do. We deliver a service which people have decided they are willing to pay a fee for. And one of the things that helps with that is that I'm not being alone. I mean I must be the lowest paid artistic director of a regular funded theatre company and I'm fine with that because I could get paid more but I choose to keep my team together and if I get paid more then they all get paid more and if you hire 300 people and you raise them all £100 then that's a lot of money. So I think they were some choices around that that meant that the slide into everybody getting paid more was gentler. Our movement from there meant that it had to be slower because everyone had to go together. There was a point when there were 34 artists in this company which meant that if one person gets paid £50 then you have to find 34 lots of £50 and I remember the time when we actually did that for the first time and then you start to go... that's a lot of money.

JP: So just on principle if you can afford to pay everyone the same amount of money, you should?

AL: Yeah, we always did. We had no money and then we had little bit of money and I worked it out that we could afford to give everyone £25 so I decided to get them dinner every night because it was easier. And then some times we'd say, if we're paying them £50 this week let's just pay them £50. And I think that that helped us slightly. I think the other thing is there was a time when I could live on £125 because I could live on £125. I mean there was a year and half when I lived out of the boot of my car and the boot of my car was like a mini wardrobe and I would sleep in the back when I couldn't find anywhere else to sleep and that's fine because I was 24 and that's alright but I don't wanna do that now because I'm 37 and I have a child- we can't all go live in my car. So, at the same time, the service I do for other's that employ me is worth (among many things) more than

£500 a week but the company pays me £500 a week and that's enough for me. So I think you make a little shuffle every 6 months and then one day you wake up and realise ok.

JP: I suppose then it must creep up on you and you don't realise until you're earning a healthy wage.

AL: Yeah and a couple of times we've been provoked- We had a producer who came in and said you have to pay me this much money every week in order for me to pay my bills. And I said if I have to pay you that then I have to pay everyone that. So, she said, then we pay everyone that. And that was a really good provocation because that felt like a big bump and we got over that. and then more recently people have come to us and said i've got three kids and i live in London, you have to pay me more and we've had to say no. There's no point having principals if you're not willing to check them and when you have to check them you have to sit down and think about why you do it and then crack on. And we change. We might up our company wage, we might decrease our company wage. A few years ago we took a collective company pay cut in order to let another member of the team in and those sorts of decisions are hard because everyone had to earn less money. When was the last time you heard anyone say yes to a company pay cut but those kind of things are important.

JP: How do you make those decisions when it comes to that? Do you sit down as a whole company or is it just a select few?

AL: There is a whole group of artists around the company but their relationship with the company is unique in that there are people that we work regularly with but might not necessarily consider themselves members. There's no unified post for that. There's a staff in that there's four of us come in every day and then theres a couple of other people who are regularly in on another basis and those are the ones who make those decisions. Whereas most of the artists we work with also work with the BBC and other places, so as long as we maintain that balance, we'll be alright.

JP: That brings me onto my next question really, what made you decide to work with/at the company full-time?

AL: It wasn't that long ago really considering but it suddenly became aware to me that sometimes people wanted to hire me personally to do something and I didn't want them to do that anymore. The reason for that is because even though they hire Alan Lane, in the marketing copy they always put 'Slung Low's Alan Lane' and also because the quickest way for this company to make money is to sell me because they can sell me for a lot more than they pay me. So they pay me £500 a week and they can sell me for substantially more than that. Sometimes we do that when we need the money or we're not doing anything we go well Alan can go do that and that'll make us money so I sometimes do that. More often than not there's a pragmatic- I would rather that I can work with my team than in any other way but sometimes that's not always possible. And if the project is right and the producer's right, I will go off and do stuff. But I work full time because we make 9 shows a year and we run a venue and the ambition of what we wanted to do took up all my time.

JP: What do you find is the biggest cost during the rehearsal process?

AL: People. All costs are people or production costs. People or effects (stuff the audience sees). and what we do is we spend a lot less time rehearsing a play with those people. Partly that's cost but it's also because we put on play's in difficult circumstances like in a town centre or on a sloping platform so you've got to be more succinct than usual. The biggest cost is actually, because we don't put on a lot of our work in leeds, housing all our team in cities that we don't already live in and i'm constantly amazed- i'm like "how much to go and live there?" You can't live in a hotel for that long and buying a house for 6 months is not cost effective. Most things need people to fix them and our shows don't run for very long, we never do more than a 3 week run, and it's a waste of my time to build a complicated computer system when I'm better off just having other people do it and it's a lot more fun that way.

JP: How long do you normally rehearse for?

AL: 3 weeks.

JP: 3 weeks? That's a quick turnaround, isn't it?

AL: Yep, unless it's a big play but nearly all the rehearsal is tech. So the structure might be 4 weeks rehearsal, 1 week tech and the actors might rehearse for another week as well.

JP: Is there usually a long discussion process before-hand about the show you're gonna do or is it just start working?

AL: There's probably more discussion with the creatives than there might be on other shows. The writer might care more about the pragmatic set, the designer will care more about the music and so on and so forth more than other shows but we try and get in and do something rather than people just delivering a service.

JP: And has that changed much from when you first started out?

AL: No, that's stayed the same. I mean then the actors were also the people who made the sets. It's changed slightly now because you can't just have people knocking bits of wood together and the idea that we are a group of people with specialisms solving a set of problems is quite new.

JP: Right, thank you. How do you usually secure funding for your productions?

AL: Commissions. So nearly all of our shows have been commissioned. There are festivals or schemes like the year of culture or theatre that want certain theatre ventures or theatre's that are gonna produce a certain number of shows a year. For example they might do A Midsummer Night's Dream and a musical and then an "other". We provide outdoor and explosive with community and what we're doing is ticking that box for the people who want to fill that slot.

JP: Do you receive any funding from the Arts Council or any similar funding bodies?

AL: We're a National Portfolio Organisation which means we get £99,000 a year which pays for this venue [The HUB], which puts on a show every few months and hosts other people's artistic processes. And then the theatre company, part of the business, makes work for other people and that part of the company makes the profit, while the building part costs all of our subsidy.

JP: So, when do you think they started to become more responsive to you as a company as opposed to 15 years ago when you were just starting out?

AL: I wanted to make shows and the Arts Council made it very clear that they weren't interested in us because quite frankly why should they be. And then as we developed we realised there was something about emerging artists who graduated and then not having anywhere to go in that there were loads of schemes and they were fine but quite expensive. So then we realised there was something in getting 30 something artists who would train and develop together and that's when the Arts Council looked up and went "Oh, ok." And I still got to create the show I wanted to make, or the semblance of one and they had a project that would nurture emerging artists so they gave us the money. I think they gave us like £4000 the first time and that was that. Having talked to them about all these plays and they hadn't given a monkey's, suddenly I understood why. I didn't talk about the audience, I didn't talk about the effect on the public, I just wanted to make a play and they were like "Why would we give you £10,000 to make a play"? Whereas they would give that money to develop artists and that was more convincing argument. But that's changed, we don't do that anymore. We put on plays to give audiences new experiences, to revitalise city centres and tap into a wider political agenda. And we do all this without changing out central mission which is

how do we create these types of theatre just by talking about what we're doing in a different way and making ourselves more fundable.

Occasionally The Rugby World Cup will come to me and say "How much do you care about rugby" and i'll ask how much have you got and then it becomes about the pride of putting on a good show.

JP: So were the initial meetings with the Arts Council quite hostile?

AL: I mean the first meeting with the Arts Council were just basically "why would we give you money" with me saying we need it and them just saying no. I thought they were there to give money to artists but they basically said "No, that's not our job" and I couldn't understand that. But it's not their job, their job is to use their money to push the agenda and they have a really clearly laid out plan for that. And if we don't agree with that we should fight for them to change the Arts Council and stop asking them for money and actually the vast majority I agree with. And it's not that I radically changed anything to please them, it was just one day when we were talking they said that they were interested in developing new artists and said you're doing that. There are 2 parts to this and I think the first part is, especially older artists, get angry that they have to tick boxes and I get that but it's not very helpful to anyone. It's like get over it or don't get over it but stop asking for money. The second thing is there are moments when the Arts Council actually grants funding against it's own agenda and then there's a perfectly legitimate case to say hang on here. But actually, what they say they do and what they do is good most of the time and sometimes that means as artists we have to learn to describe our projects in different ways but that's ok because the trick is to understand you're doing that but you're not changing the project in any way.

JP: So, i'm going to go off topic here and i'd just like to know, why are you based in Leeds?

AL: I've lived in Yorkshire all my adult life and we were in sheffield and couldn't really get anything going over there, it was a very different city to how it is now and then we met a man named Ian Bloomfield who introduced us to bradford and we were really well looked after there. Then I got a position as the resident director at the West Yorkshire Playhouse and was there for a year and a half and met my wife who didn't want to leave Leeds. So Bradford had been really good to us but we moved to Leeds and the company moved too because it became clear that there was a really good emerging artists scene here and there are three or four organisations which were fine but meant that we sort of sat in the middle. Then we decided we would be based in Holbeck and have a base here and talk to that community with all our attention.

JP: Is it important to you where your work is performed?

AL: It is in the sense that we want to make more work in Leeds on a larger scale and we're not always able to do that, but we could always strive to try and make that happen. It's not important to me when i'm off to make work elsewhere I don't say no to that. Our work now is very large and very expensive and involves a lot of tricks and people; it's very difficult to produce and takes a lot of money and time. Therefore you can't really do anything when the money dries out so we move around a lot and we'll continue to do that because we'll go where the opportunities are. But we will continue to work with the people of Holbeck because giving these people an enjoyable piece of theatre they can come to is amazing and that's about pricing and marketing and the language you use and the way the stuff is approached, that's more important to me than just location.

JP: When it comes to producing work here, how is that funded?

AL: The vast majority of funding in the city goes to about four organisations. So, about 85 percent goes to them and they have there agenda and that doesn't particularly represent the sort of community outreach, very cinematic work we produce. What we're seeing at The Crucible, Sheffield, York Theatre Royal and other kinds of places is that building's agendas change and then they'll be an opportunity for us and we'll be looking for that. At the minute there isn't the money in the system because they feel they've taken up a large portion, that money isn't there for us to

produce some of the work we want to but that might well change and we're working all the time to try and change that but we'll just have to see.

JP: Well that's everything from me, thanks very much and thanks for meeting with me.

Interview with David Wheeler (Transcribed)

Jacob Pratt: The first question is did you attend university or drama school prior to creating your own work?

David Wheeler: I went to art school original and then I went Wolverhampton Polytechnic.

JP: And did you study art at both?

DW: I studied what they called a pre-diploma course (foundation course) and then the second course at Wolverhampton which was again, you could choose if it was going to be a diploma or a BA at the end of it- so you had a choice. I was there at the change over between polytechnics and universities.

JP: When first starting out, did your company have a specific ethos?

DW: Well we deliberately didn't have any kind of manifesto or anything like that. We all came from a visual arts or music background so none of us were drama or theatre. We were from the performance arts/arts school route.

JP: So, did you know the sort of work you wanted to create when you first started?

DW: It was a mixture of things. We'd all worked with other companies which focused mainly on using visual or music starting points as the driving point as a structure for the show, rather than a literal starting point. We wanted to create everything ourselves, so we didn't use an existing script or music. We did use words but they didn't drive the show, we were much more focused on using music and visuals.

JP: How did you secure funding for your first piece of work?

DW: Well, we got- this is 40 years ago- but most of us had worked for a company called welfare state and we formed IOU in 1976. We as a group had got a reputation with the people we were working with and we got funding pretty much straight away for the work we were doing with Welfare State. Our funding has been pretty much consistent right from the start, even though the Arts Council has gone through lots of different changes since we started- we've been pretty much continually funded by them for 40 years.

JP: That's great. Did you pay the other performers/technicians during or after your first production?

DW: Again, this is 40 years ago (laughs). We paid each other right from the start.

JP: Just out of curiosity- you don't have to answer the question- was everybody paid equally or on the basis of the work they contributed?

DW: There was a group of I think 7 of us and we began very much as a cooperative, very much of the era and everyone was paid evenly. Nobody had a particular job title so the musicians made the music etc. and that was that.

JP: Sounds like a very organic process to me. What made you decide to pursue a theatre career full time?

DW: We founded the company together so we all became full time straight away. From the time when we started, the money that was dedicated for the shows also gave us enough to live on. We didn't live on very much! We very much relied on finding stuff in skips and used throw away materials to make the shows.

JP: As you have grown as a company, have your costs also grown and could you make a show now the same way in which you started?

DW: No, we couldn't do the work we do now getting stuff out of skips. Skips are different these days! You don't find anything very useful in them anymore.

JP: What do you find is your biggest cost during the rehearsal process?

DW: (Pause) People are the biggest cost. Quite a lot of the elaborate or complex sets can be quite expensive but usually the people costs are the largest. That just comes from rehearsal/development time- stuff like that- accommodation, travel, wages etc.

JP: How long do you normally rehearse a show for?

DW: That varies enormously because the shows vary so much. We probably have development periods that last a few days and then go off and come back together. Then there might be a 2 week period where we work consistently prior to the first show but we don't get a large amount.

JP: Has that changed from when started?

DW: Yeah, but again it varies. The show i'm working on at the moment I've been developing for four years, talking to people and so on. But we haven't worked on it extensively until Autumn, where people come together and go off again. So it's quite difficult to say how long these things take. These days the structure is more traditional as people have more distinct roles.

JP: And, has that been a gradual change?

DW: It has pretty much. The core collective has been the same for the last 10 years but we have brought other people in depending on the show. When we started we were all pretty young, 10 years ago people had other commitments so we had to change the structure and bring new people in. So, the structure probably started to change 30 years ago and then it's developed into what we have now.

JP: How do you usually secure funding for your productions?

DW: As a company now, there is myself, an executive producer, part-time technician, part-time accountant: that's the basic structure. Depending on what the project is, there are other people i'll bring in to do specific projects. People who come in for the show, so each project will build up. Depending on what that is the costs will mount up. We are a portfolio company so we put in an application for the next 3 years and the Arts Council give us funding to that. Unless we change what we're going to do in those 3 years, we are pretty much guaranteed that funding. It's not guaranteed if there is a change of government though, but that tends to cover the overheads. It covers the basic running costs and then we have to fund raise or work on commission. The show we were just working on called 'Rear View', we were working with a company called without walls which was part of the outdoor sector who work on festivals. They've reluctantly agreed to help us produce together with a public funding body (Arts Council Touring), so in combination we've raised enough money to create a show and tour it. That's never happened before as every year for 40 years, it's been different. There hasn't been one way to do it and depending on the work, we lean towards a different body to fund it. It's a mixture of looking towards where the funding is for the work we do, we're lucky enough to not be fixed to one thing i.e. just stage or outdoors because we do both.

JP: So you learn to shift?

DW: You can. The installations can keep us ticking over as they don't require people. Companies now may find it hard to maintain a core group of people as it's very hard to book consecutive runs of shows, so performers have to go off and do other things. It's a complicated process. It's all waiting and it's all last minute- even if you've been working on a show for 12 years!

JP: How much does money or funding drive your ideas?

DW: It does go both ways. Sometimes it's worth having ridiculously ambitious ideas because they excite people. With 'Rear View', we bought a double decker bus which we cut and created raked seating at the back. The bus itself costs around £60-70,000 to create but it's vital to the show. We can move the audience anywhere we want and that provides the setting for it. And also they can have headphones and hear the cars behind which has a performance in or something like that. We can adapt it to any city we're in and people seem to really like that idea. It was very expensive but because people like it they want to put money in to see it. It's hard to ignite people unless you have a particular hook. Sometimes you have to be canny and think, this year we'll just do installations so you don't have to bring performers in and sometimes you'll do a smaller show because you want to tour smaller places.

JP: That brings me onto the next question really, is it important to you where your work is produced and performed?

DW: Yes it is. We like to cover everything really. Sometimes it's good to work in a context where people know what to expect- they know what IOU is and they come to see IOU because they like the work and they know about art-based theatre. You can work very subtly in that sort of context. But it's also good to show people who've never seen that kind of work before, making no excuses for it but just seeing how that works. Being able to introduce people to these ideas can be very rewarding because people who think it's absurd or rubbish- suddenly something clicks- and they think actually it's not that weird. If you haven't been to art or drama school there are different ways of engaging with it. We like to work in lots of different contexts and we love to have people engaging in what we do.

JP: That's the end of the interview, thank you very much.

Interview with John Britton (Transcribed)

Jacob Pratt: The first question is did you attend university or drama school prior to creating your own work?

John Britton: Yeah. I started making work in 1989 after leaving a Masters in theatre at Leeds University.

JP: And before that, did you study drama for your degree as well?

JB: No, I studied English Literature at Hull.

JP: If you don't mind me asking, what made you decide to pursue theatre?

JB: I always wanted to do theatre but my parents were reluctant to let me do it. Back in the 80s there weren't many drama courses and it was pretty unknown about what it was a subject, so they made me study English Literature- which i'm pretty glad about really.

JP: When you first started, did you have a specific ethos in mind?

JB: Well it's kind of difficult really, yes and no. I joined a company as a student. Some students in the year above me set up a company with an extremely misguided set of intentions which they failed to realise completely which had to do with integrating world theatre and British theatre which sort of meant do workshops in Chinese theatre and pretend your doing Chinese theatre. It was incredibly inept and the company fell apart after a brief Edinburgh season. But I took the company on and didn't really have any ethos other than the same sort of lovely, sweet, naive bullshit that everyone has at 20- "I'm going to revitalise British theatre" etc. The same sort of stuff you see on everyone's press release and quite rightly because everyone wants to do that but nobody knows how. Then I put my own work to sleep for about 5 years and become an actor with another company, who had a strong aesthetic drive, doing strongly physical ensemble work. After that, I started to look very specifically at story telling through body and from then on things became more systematic. Up until then, I was sort of just desperately trying to find a starting point, which is right. If you know what it is when you're 25, it's probably driven by a need to get funding and not a drive to make art. But that's probably another point altogether.

JP: We might end up going down that route in a bit but how did you get funding for your first piece of work?

JB: I didn't. I printed my own publicity, spent as little as possible, tried recoup my costs through touring and when I didn't it hurt because I was on the dole at the time. I didn't get any support, I don't come from a family that has money and had no parental support but I worked. I did youth theatre, some teaching work, whatever but there was no funding.

JP: So you did other jobs on the side to keep going?

JB: Yeah, pretty much always in the domain of being an artist. I was an assistant co-director for a youth theatre in Leeds for a while, bits and pieces, artist in school stuff. Stuff. Literally anything. At the time you could claim the dole and housing benefit, so I lived on that for the best part of a decade. I lived on nothing and funding was a lot easier to get then than it is now, but you still didn't get any to start with.

JP: This is probably a silly question but did you pay the performers in your company after your first production?

JB: No. Well actually in a weird sort of way- yes. The first production I did made a loss because I paid for it all myself but I actually gave everyone in my company £20 essentially from my own pocket because it felt important to me that there was something there.

JP: A token gesture?

JB: Yes, pitiable but something.

JP: What made you decide to work for a company full time?

JB: It's never been about full time work. Working with a company has never been a full time job, it's not a career structure. It [Duende] is a legal, financial form that allows me to create work. For some people it works, but for me it has never been important to create a company i.e. an employer because that requires engagement with funding bodies and that comes with it the loss of the ability to create the work you want to. To create a company meaning a full-time employer requires you to be part of the system and i've never wanted to be part of the system. The political system or the economic system. It's called a company- is Duende a company? I mean legally it's two companies, two different financial structures based in the UK but is it a company? I don't fucking know and quite frankly I don't really care. It is name under which I run my school and some productions, it is a way of people knowing my work and as long as it serves that function, it serves it's function. But as full time place to be employed- I don't think that'll ever happen. I'm not frankly that interested in it because then you've got to imply administrators who you've got to pay and i'm interested in paying artists not paying company structures.

JP: You're the first person who's actually said that through these interviews.

JB: I said it was a strange beast. I mean what's the ambition? What is your ambition when you start creating your own work? If your ambition is to be full time employed- don't be a fucking artist. There are good ways to get paid in full time work and artist is not one of them. If that is your ambition then you're a fool. If your ambition is to make contributions to social progress or development or educational development, both of which I have a deep respect for, then you might want to question if you're setting up a performance company or whether you're in fact setting up a social enterprise which operates through art. I think that's one of the things artists do very well, we make the world better through social engagement. If what you're doing is setting up a company because you have a vision for a kind of art or a kind of renegotiation of the relationship with audience or perhaps, as I do, a vision towards other forms of politics then to try and turn that into a company structure alongside other company structures- a bakery, a shop, a theatre company- to be assimilated into the system requires you to be a conformist. You can be a radical baker but you still have to do your taxes. Now there's nothing wrong with that, I have enormous respect for people who run companies but that was never my intention. My intention as always as an artist to find a vehicle in order to explore the work I feel I need to do and work with the people I want to work with, whether I pay them or not. And I do pay people when I can. Everyone who works for the school gets paid at a decent level- apart from me! To find people with whom I can collaborate, develop my art and to enter into new and complicated relationships with audiences. But I get to decide who those audiences are. I'm not having any fucking government telling me what audiences I ought to engage with. Nor am I having any government telling me how to engage in social development because basically governments are the problem. They are not going to set the solutions so i've never been interested in creating a company that has to conform to systems that I feel myself morally, ethically and political opposed to. Now i'm not saying that's a better position than any other but I do think it's useful to you (if you're setting up a company) to ask, what does that actually mean? Because you know, I run a company but I don't know what that fucking means! I've been running company's for 30 years but I don't know what it means. I do know what it means to be an artist and any company structure I set up must uncompromisingly serve the making of art. If it does not then it is the wrong structure and it has to be ditched or moved beyond. I do not make art to serve the means of the company, I have a company to serve the means of the art and it has to be that way round for me. There are plenty of other jobs for that- and you get a pension.

JP: So, out of interest if someone came to you and tried to commission work from you, what would your stance be?

JB: I think it depends on the work, I was having this conversation with someone in India 3 days ago. They work with some of the big Indian conglomerations doing corporate training. I have no problem with it at all, if a company wanted me to do corporate training- providing it's a company that I don't have a moral, ethical, political problem with. And I mean, anyone can make ethical problems with any company. I mean I probably wouldn't work with an oil company, weapons manufacturer or tobacco company but if a big conglomerate wanted me to do corporate work for them, I would charge them a high fee and I would give them the very best of what I can give them. And I would do so in an attempt to make those people's lives who work for the company better. It's not my work. It would be a way of doing no harm and a little bit of good and earn money to make my life a little bit more comfortable and to be able to make sure I can continue to do my art. I have no problem with it. If someone came to me and said we need you to make a show that communicates the fact that the world needs more oil so we need to drill in the artic- I am not going to do that. But if a company were to come to me in India and say we're interested in you making a show as a westerner where you work with one of the Indian myths and work with a mixed cast and we don't really care where that goes. And I say to them: "You are aware that I might do some stuff that's a bit controversial" and they say "great", and I'll take your money. For me, I'll take money from governments and I don't think governments are any more moral or ethical than private industry- they're both out to lie through their teeth to get elected and to make profits- and individuals generally lie through their teeth to survive so none of us are particularly ethical at all. Once a certain ethical threshold has been passed however-

JP: It gets easier to distinguish?

JB: Yes. It's also being willing because I don't know how any of this works and I generally don't know- I mean I grew up in the 80s and 90s and believe state funding was good and private funding was bad- government good, companies bad. But I live in a country that's gone off and committed genocide in the middle east. Funding from my government that's currently carpet bombing civilians in Syria? Is that good? Europeans who let 700 migrants drown in the Mediterranean yesterday? I know companies who are doing really good work, I also know companies who are doing a lot of fucking shit destroying the world and governments that are trying to do really good things. So for me, I'm very happy for people to make moral absolutes but I don't understand it. I hear throw words around and say with governments you have democratic control but that's bullshit. If we exercised any control against our government, they would shut it down. And I'm not joking, that's what's just happened in Brazil a few weeks ago. You have most of the senate being investigated for corruption and the first female president ever has been impeached, so they can close down the corruption investigations. I think we're naive if we don't think the same couldn't happen in this country. We're not a democracy, we're an oligarchy, we're run by the rich and always have been. So if somebody wants to give me money to make art, I have to listen to what they say. I have to say yes, no and ask are they gonna do any harm? If not then I usually say yes because then I get to do some work, pay people, artists get good jobs, audiences get a good experience. But I don't think any of the ethical absolutes make sense. In some ways I'm an extremely radical socialist but I'm also an anarchist and a libertarian so where the fuck does that leave me? There's no blanket rule. There are no rules at all, there's only an attempt to act appropriately to the stimuli out there. I have to try to react from the best place of integrity I can. Sometimes you get it horribly wrong. You're working for someone and you think this is the wrong decision so you finish the work and tell yourself you won't do it again. Don't beat yourself up about it.

JP: What do you find is your biggest cost during the rehearsal process?

JB: Well you see, that's why I'm a strange beast. I don't really have rehearsal processes like that. My company does a lot of improvisational work. When all six of us are in the same country at the same time, we hold an improvised meeting of sorts. So costs are zero. I'm currently making a new solo show, so the cost for that are gonna be set construction, studio hire, production, paying my

producer so most of what my company's business is more educational than financial. I run the school which is the income generating side of Duende and I in residency's and workshops. Most of what I do as a director, because i'm directing three shows in the next two months- but that doesn't go through Duende. Duende is a form for a certain kind of work. I'm directing a circus show in Australia next month and it would just confuse things if I said that was Duende and it's not. That's John Britton as a director doing something. I'm directing a show in Norway in a couple of weeks- not Duende work. It might say in the program "John Britton is the director of Duende" but it's not a Duende show.

JP: How do you make those decisions?

JB: Again, it's not quite clear cut but it is clear cut. The work that comes out of my training work, the self with others which is the heart of the school's work. Residency's are dealing with that, workshops are dealing with that. The solo show that i'm making for next year, i'm the performer in it so that's that. It's about an ethical and an aesthetic set of choices so the Duende work is my vision as a director/performer. The teaching work is my vision as a way of training performers and so on. What I do when i'm collaborating with someone in Norway who'd writing about what she's dealing with over there or the circus show which is very much a co-creation as i've written it with the performer but it doesn't come under the boundaries of ethics or the aesthetics of Duende. That's me with a certain set of skills saying i'm for hire here. It doesn't mean it's any less important than the Duende work, it just differs in taste. I do try to limit what is Duende a bit so that Duende at some level has a distinctive reputation. It's a little amorphous because Duende is as a company and the work that others do away from the company is not Duende unless i'm involved in it. That might change over the next few years because i'm in the process of training people to deliver work under the Duende name without me being involved with it. But i'm not comfortable with people doing that unless I know they know the work at a deep level and not just in how they run the exercises but all the ethical and pedagogical structures underneath that so i'm training others through that process.

JP: Is that so you can back off and do more of your own work?

JB: Yes. There's a lot of interest in India with what i'm doing and i'd like to encourage more indian performers to come to the school and maybe run the school there in a few years time. I don't have the time to travel across india and do smallish workshops and that's not really what i'm interested in anymore. I try to do fewer of these now because they earn a bit of money and they're interesting enough but if I had a choice between doing them and directing a show, i'd choose to direct a show. So if i can have someone who's an Indian performer who can deliver the work there and then hopefully run the school, then I can choose to do other work instead of the lower-level stuff. For a performer that's a fantastic learning and earning opportunity so it's a win-win situation. It means that more work can happen under the name of Duende and it frees me to do other work because i'm already too busy.

JP: That brings me onto my next question really, is it important to you where the Duende work is performed or produced?

JB: Yes and no. It's important that everything that Duende does is respectful and responsive to where it is. I mean, I don't produce a show and then take it anywhere. I produced a show in Mumbai ten days ago which as an improvisational piece in a horrible space- sort of inappropriate but we had to change it last minute. So space is really important in that sense but i'm not interested in the status of a space. I mean it would be great if the West Yorkshire Playhouse took on my solo show but it's not that important to me. If I had to choose between performing in a certain quality of venue to an audience that I'm not so interested in between that and performing in places where there's a genuine passion and interest even though the former might pay more, i'm generally more interested in doing that. That sort of thing is infinitely more interesting than performing in a posh venue even though that opens certain doors and money isn't a dirty word. I'm not even the slightest bit embarrassed about asking for money from rich people because I don't earn a lot when

I work for non-rich people. The financial sustainability of a theatre company is always crucial, unless you're a rich boy and your parents can subsidise you. I have no subsidy, if I don't earn money I don't pay my mortgage. I don't make work to attract a certain venue because then you have others deciding what work you make and that's the artists job. The work has to find itself, it's not financially sensible and that's why the company structure destroys art.

JP: That's all we have time for, thank you very much.

Interview with Francesca Clark (Transcribed)

Jacob Pratt: Ok, so the first question is did you attend university or drama school prior to creating your own work?

Francesca Clarke: Yes I did. I went to the University of Reading and I did a BA in film and theatre. It was a single honours degree but I ended up specialising in theatre but the film background was useful as well. I then actually worked in theatre briefly and then went to drama school because I wanted to be an actor. I went to The Poor School at King's Cross, did that for 2 years and then decided I definitely did not want to be an actor after the course. I then went into arts administration. So technically yes but I wouldn't have said my drama school training helped me in any way.

JP: If you don't mind me going off topic a little, what made you decide that acting wasn't for you?

FC: Well I'd always acted when I was younger, but I had not idea about the other roles available to people who want to make work. I only knew about actors, directors and so on. Then at university I ended up taking some shows to Edinburgh and as often is the case I ended up producing it without really realising I was producing it. You're just doing it and then suddenly you're a producer! I realised that I actually really enjoyed the operational side of things. Then when I left uni I was lucky enough to get a job at The Orange Tree but I had this worry that once I had a job in arts administration I might always have regrets that I wouldn't be an actor. But then by the time I had finished drama school, I preferred the stability that arts administration gives you and I still get the buzz without having to be the person on stage. I felt just as creatively involved without actually performing.

JP: So, when first starting out in the industry, did you have a particular ethos or plan for your career in mind?

FC: No.

JP: Good answer!

FC: I was really keen. Just to backtrack slightly, I basically ended up taking a gap year inadvertently between A-Levels and uni because I'd applied for a course which ended up being the wrong course for me, so I left after one term. So I had a period of 10 months before the course I wanted to do started. So I wrote to around 100-150 drama schools, company's, whatever just asking for experience and I ended up interning at The National Theatre and a few other places. So, by the time I started my course I already had this experience at The National- my only ethos was to work hard and get experience. I was very aware of how much I didn't know. I had a lack of knowledge of the industry and I just wanted to try and fill those gaps.

JP: Great. When it came to creating your own work, how did you get funding/publicity for that?

FC: The first work I properly did myself was the show we took to Edinburgh which we did under the banner of our university drama society, so we got some funding from the university. We did a lot of fund raising events, parties and then we were able to make it work with lots of people coming along and any profit from that went to the show. It was very much within the confines so being first year drama students as opposed to having a relationship with the Arts Council or anything like that. I think we did- I can't remember what it's called now- but like when you throw sponges at people for charity. We did a lot of that kind of stuff. Then when I left and went to The Orange Tree I didn't have to do any of that because it wasn't a part of my job and then at HighTide we started a relationship with the Arts Council and have continued to receive funding from them.

JP: How did you get to HighTide?

FC: Well to be frank, I went to university with Steven who directed our very first show we took to Edinburgh. So we'd worked together a few times and he had already been working at HighTide for a few years and when I left drama school he told me they were looking to hire a general manager. I went in for an interview and got the job. It was from the connection, but I didn't get the job because of that but from my experience at The Orange Tree doing all different areas of arts administration, the skills I had learned from that and from the interning I had done after my A-Levels. I basically has enough experience, I could come on board.

JP: Going back to that first university production, did you pay the performers/technicians in the company or was it more important to just get your work out there?

FC: I think- well, they were all our friends- I don't think we paid anyone but everyone had their accommodation covered. Nobody lost money but nobody made anything and everyone was broke when we came back. I think we had a month with no money until our student loans came in! Obviously that's not something I would do now but we never thought we'd make any money. We were just doing it for the experience.

JP: Do you remember when the first time was you paid performers in a company?

FC: Yeah, I mean i'm a bit biased really because I went straight to The Orange Tree which has funding from the Arts Council. Obviously everyone gets paid properly through the Arts Council and everyone gets paid properly at HighTide. I think i'm quite rare in that I haven't done a lot of freelance producing, i'm sure a lot of the other people you've spoken to have done a lot on their own. I have done but that's only been really in the last couple of years. Doing my own work, I have been able to pay everybody properly.

JP: What have you found to be the be the biggest cost (as a producer) during the rehearsal process?

FC: Paying people, i'd say. You can have a production where you have a hundred thousand pounds but Equity minimum is Equity minimum whichever way you go about it. And I strongly believe that it's really important unless you work somewhere very commercial where you should be paid higher. Fees as well. If you want a great lighting designer you have to pay for it but I don't begrudge that.

JP: This might not be relevant, but how do you normally secure funding for your productions? Maybe you could talk about your own work if that's more relevant?

FC: Sure. I've produced two independent projects. One was called Russian Me and the other was Disco Pigs. Both of those I got successful Grants for the Arts applications from the Arts Council. I also did a crowd-funder which raised £5000 and was great but really hard work. Individual donations as well. One of our producers (who was Jewish) had contacts and received donations from the Jewish community as well. That's not really a source I can tap into for future shows but you do sort of target the groups who might have an interest in your work. But mainly our funding comes from the Arts Council.

JP: Right. And has it been an easy process working with the Arts Council or have you found it difficult at times?

FC: I would say that the Arts Council are an amazing organisation and we wouldn't exist without them. They have a few different ways they can fund you. You could be an NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) which means you get regular money from them to do your work. HighTide for example gets about £200,00 a year to do our work and that can go towards our core costs. It can go towards anything you need it to go towards but it's a 3 year programme which means we're funded until the end of 2017. We're currently putting in an application this summer for 2018-onwards. If you're an NPO, it's great because it means you can plan which is what's really difficult

without organisation funding because if you don't know that you're getting regular funding it's really hard to make business plans. Quite a lot of controversy comes from NPO's because you've got organisations like The National (I might be wrong so don't quote me on this) that get like £18 million or something like that form the Arts Council. That helps them create shows like War Horse and One Man, Two Guv'nors which have the potential to create huge profits. Then what can happen is regional companies can suffer- what's the company in Leeds? Red Ladder? They've just done The Damned United. They were an NPO but they've recently been cut and the same thing happened to The Orange Tree a few years ago, so it does happen. You have to justify yourself a lot as to why you deserve funding but that's another thing. Because we are an NPO we can't then apply for Grants for the Arts which are for one off projects. For my freelance work, because i'm not an NPO (HighTide is) I or other people in the team can apply for Grants for the Arts funding. We can say, we're doing a show and we're going to need this much money to help me with this. There's other ways as well but those are the two i'm most familiar with.

JP: Have you ever had to tweak a project based on what the Arts Council would be willing to fund?

FC: No, I think the biggest challenge is making sure your application fits what they want. They don't come back to you and say we'll give the funding if you do two nights in Bridlington. It's either a yes or a no. They don't come back and say we'll give you less or more money either, it's all or nothing. What you have to make sure of is that your application is robust in the first place. You can reapply but you need to make sure you have enough breathing room. Sometimes you might even get turned away because they've been similar applications. For example, if you do one, you might get turned away because they have had a lot of applications from Huddersfield and then you end up lower down the pecking order. They'll tell you if you're not eligible for certain reasons- if the numbers don't add up or something like that- but i've always found them really good. You do have to put the work in and make sure your application is robust which is good because it makes you challenge your own process. The Arts Council might turn around and say this is great but we're worried it's not financially stable because you want to pay a designer £10,000 and it might make you have a rethink of that. Once you've done that the rest is quite straight forward. You have to write interim reports and evaluation reports but it's fine if everything doesn't go to plan. You might say you'd perform a show at the West Yorkshire Playhouse (WYP) and if that's cancelled for whatever reason, you don't have to give the money back. They're interested in the process and what you learn from it and not actually what you're applying for.

JP: Right. Is it important to you where your work is produced and performed?

FC: Yes. Well, we're an Eastern based organisation so we're funded to create work in Suffolk- that's our remit. Our annual festival is in Alborough which is a very special place however we don't want our work to be spread further. We try and co-produce with venues to make sure we have a bigger spread. So last year we did a show at The Royal Exchange, Manchester and one in Liverpool so we want to make sure we're not just based in London and Suffolk. Though we are funded to make work in Suffolk.

JP: This is probably an awkward question but why is it important for you to reach a wider audience with your work?

FC: Because we're a writer led organisation, it's always been important for as many people to see new writing as possible. As much as i'd love to think we could get everyone in Suffolk to see our work, it's probably more realistic to give people not from Suffolk to see the same chance.

JP: Well, that's everything from me unless you have anything to add?

FC: My personal advice to you is that you need to be challenged and what's great about university is that it gives you the freedom to explore big ideas. When you finish university and the pressure's off, the hard thing is not being surrounded by that creative environment all the time. If you find your work well with someone, do hold onto that because if you know you can work with them at

university, the chances are you'll be able to work with them in the outside world. Not that it should be a closed shop but if you've got people you can collaborate with that is so important. I think I found it harder to find people to collaborate with post-education- when you're out of the creative bubble. You'll find that there a lot of people who have a lot of ideas and then they leave because they've found a new job and their focus changes. Also, don't take it personally if people do walk away because everyone's life changes. The first iteration of what you might want to achieve, might change. Steven and I looked at setting up a company after university and makes me cringe thinking of some of the names we came up with, the ideas! We've ended up working together successfully but there have been there or four different versions of what we could have been doing. I look back and I think they were all terrible but something stuck.

Start a relationship with the Arts Council. They have a few different venues that they work with (WYP for example) and they sometimes hold workshops on how to apply. They can be very useful for applications because you can put that you attended and met Joe Bloggs and they like to see that you have engaged with them before your application. They like to hear from new people, so they're not giving money to the same old organisations. Don't feel like you can't approach them. I would suggest starting off small, maybe £2-3,000 so then they get to know you and maybe next time you can ask for £5,000? Don't just fill in a 20 grand application as lovely as that would be!

JP: Would you mind if I ran a quote past you just before we finish?

FC: Sure!

JP: I interviewed someone previously, who stated "If you want a career- don't go into the theatre." It sounds like you've had quite a different experience.

FC: Yes, I have. I mean i'm having a child and I feel I can support said child through this job but i'm incredibly lucky to have a permanent salary with holiday pay and a pension and all that good stuff. I'm also aware that i'm an executive producer. My role can be classed a non-creative role- i'm not a director/actor/writer. I'm guessing that quote came from a director! I do think my role is completely different. I get paid to work 9-5 and i'm not in the rehearsal room but also, I don't want to be. I don't think that quote is true at all but I completely understand that it's not for everyone. The reason is why I didn't go into acting is that I wanted control over my own career. I like the 9-5, having my weekends free and seeing mob friends and family but that's not for everyone. I know some people who would go crazy sitting behind a desk all day but I get my creative satisfaction from doing that. We launched a show at The Traverse last night called *Infidelity* and Bob Drummond who's performing it did an extract that i've been working on with him since December and I got such a buzz. I didn't feel like why aren't people clapping for me? I felt completely proud. So, I completely disagree but I am aware that i'm in the minority. I would say it is possible, especially if you want to be an arts administrator. If you love marketing, fundraising, the technical side of it there are absolutely jobs out there for you. Unless we bring back the rep system where we have actors on a permanent pay roll, I don't see how that's going to change.

JP: Thank you very much, this has been really interesting.

FC: Alright, thank you. Have a good day!

Interview with Josh Guiry

Due to a technical fault, the interview with Josh Guiry cannot be reproduced here. His work and his ethos have instead been referenced in anecdotal terms and have been included in this paper to demonstrate an alternative route of pursuing a career within a theatre company.

After the interview was conducted, a number of research notes were recorded:

- 1). Funding can come from unlikely sources, such as in this case, a local branch of a Labour trade union.
- 2). If not charging an audience to watch your performance, revenue must be gathered from other sources or else the company will have little chance of success.
- 3). Perhaps the nature of Guiry's work and his unwillingness to sacrifice his political beliefs led to the disbanding of Official Culture.
- 4). Guiry did not have a particular structure or ethos when forming his company, this might have impacted the success of the company.
- 5). The company was never set up as a commercial venture. The founders all wanted to keep creating work after university and did not know another way of doing so. For them setting up a theatre company was the only chance of them having a creative career but money seems to have been rarely considered.

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